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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

RESPONDING TO FINANCIAL CONSTRAINT: DOWNSIZING IN ALBERTA SCHOOL JURISDICTIONS

by

© Naida Tattersall

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Educational Administration

Edmonton, Alberta
Spring 1994 ©

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ISBN 0-612-11389-2

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DEGREE:	Doctor Of Philosophy
YEAR THIS DEGREE GRANTED:	1994

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DEDICATION

To the memory of my parents, Agnes Ada and John William (Jack) Tattersall, whose wisdom, integrity, humor, and (oft-tried) patience, provided the context for my lifelong learning.

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to identify the downsizing and/or budget reduction strategies used by Alberta school jurisdictions in response to financial constraint with the intent of understanding the decision-making processes involved and to gain some impression of the incidence and extent of downsizing activities throughout the province. A subsidiary intent was the investigation of any relationships which may have existed between the context in which those strategies evolved, the decision-making processes for determining the same strategies, and the actual strategies employed.

Data were collected from three main sources: (a) a questionnaire survey completed by CEOs of 86% of the 139 individual or "cooperatively managed" (as defined for the purposes of the study) operational school jurisdictions in Alberta, (b) post-survey interviews conducted with a range of personnel from two of the respondent jurisdictions which were engaged in downsizing activities, and (c) statistical information collated by Alberta Education from the Department's administrative records and reports submitted to the Department by school jurisdictions. Information gained was analyzed using various statistical techniques appropriate to the descriptive and exploratory nature of the study and by content analysis of responses to open-ended questions on the survey and transcripts of the post-survey interviews.

The study revealed that at least 51 percent of school jurisdictions in Alberta were engaged in downsizing/budget reduction activities during the 1993-94 fiscal year. The most prevalent responses to financial constraint included increasing revenue through local requisitions and a variety of user fees. Actual budget reduction strategies most often used by downsizing jurisdictions were the natural attrition of

staff, early retirements, and the reduction of direct spending on capital expenditures, instructional supplies and materials, and the maintenance of facilities.

Less than 30 percent of the respondent jurisdictions which indicated they were involved in downsizing/budget restraint had implemented more flexible employment policies and/or practices as a management strategy, though over 50 percent appeared well prepared with redeployment/redundancy polices.

The study revealed administrators' reliance on relatively few sources of information as a basis for their decision-making in respect of strategies for downsizing, but a high awareness of the benefits of participatory decision-making processes. Respondent CEOs indicated they believed they had used rational decision-making process in responding to economic pressures from the external environment.

The results of the study substantiate the continuing relevance of much of the "advice" literature from the late 1970s-early 1980s when enrollment decline forced school jurisdictional administrators to reevaluate their administrative structures and operations. Despite the recognized need for fundamental change to the delivery of educational services as a strategic response to financial constraint, there appeared to be little evidence that such activity had taken place in Alberta's school jurisdictions during the period examined by the study.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To the many people who have contributed to, and supported the completion of this study, I offer you my sincere appreciation and gratitude. I am most appreciative of Dr. Gordon McIntosh's ability to offer encouragement concurrent with constructive criticism; his willingness to give extensive time to discussion and comment; his thoughtful and approachable manner, and his commitment to the timely completion of the dissertation. Gratitude is also due to the other members of my committee, Drs. D. M. Richards, W. R. Duke, M. Horowitz, L. J. LaRocque, and C. Montgomerie who assisted me by their insights, advice, and academically provocative questions. To Dr. Duke and my student colleagues, I offer special thanks for their introductions to people in key organizations and for their eagerness to share their experiences and knowledge (especially of protocol) of the Canadian/Alberta educational scene with an Antipodean from a significantly different administrative structure to that chosen for study. Appreciation is also due to Dr. B Levin as external examiner for his input and willingness to be involved with the study.

Likewise deserving of mention are the many participants in the study: the school jurisdiction CEOs who gave of their valuable time and of their personal judgment in responding to a survey on a somewhat sensitive issue, and their staff who further indulged my need for interviews; the personnel from Alberta Education who searched out much needed information and ensured its timely receipt; the College of Alberta School Superintendents and the Alberta School Boards Association, whose concern for their membership in times of financial constraint led them either to support the study or involve me in activities the better to glean the *status quo*.

I am also indebted to senior offices of the Northern Territory Department of Education who provided the opportunity, in addition to significant support and encouragement, to undertake my studies at the University of Alberta.

The value of various other teaching and support staff of the Department of Educational Administration in completing my studies is humbly acknowledged; particularly that of Chris Prokop in her most patient and expert assistance with data analysis and her consistent encouragement and personal support when most needed; her role was integral to the successful conclusion the study.

To my sister and other friends who accepted responsibility for managing my personal affairs while I was absent from Australia, I hope to be able to reciprocate in some way someday. To other friends who regularly provided compelling reasons to keep on task, thank you for your noble persistence.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter .... Page

1 INTRODUCTION 1

Purpose of the Study 2

Statement of Problem 2

Research Questions 2

Significance of the Study 4

Assumptions 7

Delimitations 9

Limitations 10

Definitions/Terminology 10

Organization of the Thesis 14

2 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE 16

Downsizing 16

The Economic Context 16

Objectives of Downsizing 17

Downsizing Strategies 18

The Educational Context 22

Decision Making 25

Strategic Decision Making 26

Other Models/Typologies 31

Rational 31

Bureaucratic 32

Political 32

Organized Anarchy 33

Garbage Can ... 33
Collegial ... 34
Participative ... 35
Administrative ... 37
Conclusion ... 37
Decision Making in School Jurisdictions ... 38
Application of Models/Typologies ... 38
Decision-Making Processes Specific to the Setting ... 42
Decision Making Relating to Downsizing ... 47
Decision Making Regarding Downsizing in School Jurisdictions ... 50
Threat or Opportunity ... 51
Models/Typologies ... 52
Impact on Staffing ... 57
Criteria ... 57
Conclusion ... 59
Conceptual Framework ... 61

3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY ... 64
Design of the Study ... 64
Methodology ... 67
Data Collection ... 67
Questionnaire ... 68
Pilot study. ... 72
Distribution and return of questionnaire ... 73
Post-Survey Interviews ... 74
Data Analysis ... 77

Validity and Reliability 78
Ethical Considerations 79
Profile of Respondents 80

4 RESEARCH FINDINGS 85
The Administrative and Financial Context 85
Results of the Survey and Interviews 90
Organizational/Financial Status of Jurisdictions 90
Organizational Status 90
Financial Status 91
Strategies for Increasing Revenue 91
Profile of Respondent Jurisdictions 92
Specific Responses to Financial Constraint 94
Downsizing/Budget Reduction Goals 95
Downsizing/Budget Reduction Strategies 96
Reduction of staff 99
Redeployment of staff 102
Rationalization of assets and services 103
Reduction of direct spending 106
Changes to Personnel Employment Policies and Practices 107
Redeployment/Redundancy Policies 108
Background statements 108
Guidelines/regulations 109
Criteria for layoffs 109
Legalities 111

Decision-Making Processes Used in Responding to Financial Constraint 111
    Bases of Information for Decision Making 111
    Contextual Influences on Decision Making 113
        Related to strategies 113
        Related to personnel policies/practices 114
    Participation in Decision Making 116
    Sources of Recommended Strategies 118
    Decision-making Models/Typologies 119
        Activity sequences 119
            Related to size of jurisdiction 120
            Related to strategies 120
        Characteristics of decision-making models/typologies 121
            Related to size of jurisdiction 130
            Related to strategies. 131
            Related to contextual influences 134
        Organizational context of decision making 134
        Participation in decision making 135
        CEOs' perceptions of the financial context of decision making 137
        Decision motives 138
            Related to contextual influences 140
            Related to participation in decision making 140
            Related to decision-making processes 141

            Monitoring the results of the decision making 141
            Administrative/management decisions 142
    Personal Perceptions of CEOs about Decision Making in Response to Financial Constraint 144
        Involvement in the Process 144
        Strategic Planning 145
    Personal Details of Respondents 147
        Educational Background 148
            Related to decision making 148
        Professional Experience 149
            Related to decision making 151
    Summative Comments on Downsizing/Budget Reduction by Study Participants 152
        Budgets 152
        Conclusion 155
    Issues Identified in Post-Survey Interviews 157
        Communicating the Strategies 157
        Identifying Alternative Strategies 160
        Doing More (or at Least the Same) with Less 161
    Summary 162

5 SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS 164
  Overview of the Study 164
  Summary of Findings 165
    The Extent and Distribution of Downsizing Activity in Alberta Public School Jurisdictions 166
    Strategies Employed by School Jurisdictions 169

The Relationship Between Context and the Selection of Strategies 171
Decision-Making Criteria as Determinants of Strategies 172
The Decision-Making Process 174
Participation in Decision Making 175
The Impact of Decisions Relating to Downsizing on Personnel/Employment Policies 177
The Context of Decision Making Regarding Downsizing 179
The Decision-Making Processes Relating to Downsizing 181
The Content of Decisions Made in Respect of Downsizing 181
Discussion 183
Implications and Recommendations for Practice 193
Implications and Recommendations for Research 198
Concluding Remarks and Personal Reflections 200

BIBLIOGRAPHY 207

APPENDICES

A: Questionnaire and Interview Nomination Form 226
B: Pilot Study Letter of Transmittal 244
C: Letter of Transmittal 246
D: Postcard Reminder 248
E: Follow-Up Letter 250
F: Post-Survey Interview Schedule 252
G: Letter to Accompany Interview Transcripts 254

H: Table 4.6.2: Rank Ordering of Strategies Within Categories Used by Downsizing Jurisdictions to Meet Downsizing/Budget Reduction Goals 256

LIST OF TABLES

Table .... Page

3.1 Profile of Responses as per Size of Jurisdiction 81

3.2 Comparison of Respondent Jurisdictions 83

4.1 Alberta School Jurisdiction Revenues 87

4.2 Difference in Grants Between 1992-93 and 1993-94 88

4.3 Difference in Budgeted Expenditures Between 1992-93 and 1993-94........... 89

4.4 Respondents Categorized as per Organizational/Financial Status 92

4.5 Respondents Categorized as per Difference Between Budgets for 1992-93 and 1993-94 93

4.6.1 Rank Ordering of Strategies Used by Downsizing Jurisdictions 97

4.7 Rank Ordering of Information Bases Used to Determine Downsizing/Budget Reduction Strategies 112

4.8 Rank Ordering of Influence of Issues on Decision Making.......................... 113

4.9 Rank Ordering of Formal Participants in the Decision-Making Process 116

4.10 Rank Ordering of Sources of Information and Recommendations 119

4.11 Rank Ordering of Characteristics Featured in the Downsizing Decision-Making Processes 122

4.12 Varimax Factor Solution for 24 Characteristics of Decision Making Using 4 Factors 124

4.13 Rank Ordering of Factors According to the Extent of Their Use in the Decision-Making Process 128

4.14 Means of Extent to Which Factors Featured in Different Categories of Jurisdictions 130

4.15 Rank Ordering of CEOs' Recommendations for Involvement of Groups/Individuals in Decision Making 145
4.16 Personal Characteristics of CEOs of Downsizing Jurisdictions 147
4.17 Educational Background of CEOs of Downsizing Jurisdictions 148
4.18 Experience of CEOs of Downsizing Jurisdictions 150
4.19 School Jurisdictions' Total Budget (Expenditure) Figures for 1992-93 and 1993-94........ 152
4.6.2 Rank Ordering of Strategies Within Categories Used by Downsizing Jurisdictions to Meet Downsizing/Budget Reduction Goals........256

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure .... Page

2.1 Buffer Employment Strategies 20

2.2 Inner Rings of Defense 20

2.3 Conceptual Framework 62

3.1 School Jurisdiction Size in Alberta, 1993 80

4.1 Provincial and Local Share of Basic Education Funding 1993-94 88

4.2 Diagrammatic Representation of Downsizing/Budget Reduction Strategies Chosen as per Respondents' Perception of Influence of Issues 115

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Most advanced industrial nations are experiencing an economic recession that has not only forced many private sector enterprises to shut down or reduce their operations, but has also compelled governments to severely restrict public sector spending. In such a climate, education has become visibly vulnerable as a government cost center (Alberta Education, 1993b; Lakomski, 1993; Monk, 1992; Williams, 1986; Wirt & Harman, 1986) resulting in demands by political and economic leaders that education be realigned in accordance with the depressed economy and changing social needs. As stated by Wotherspoon (1991):

> Amidst the rhetoric of educational change, jurisdictions across Canada and in other advanced industrial nations have moved actively to retrench educational services by means of cost-containment strategies induced by actual or impending budgetary limitations and cutbacks. Programs of educational restraint and structural administrative changes in many provinces, the downsizing and consolidation of elementary, secondary and post-secondary education divisions in various jurisdictions, and funding limitations imposed by the federal government to aboriginal students and general post-secondary education exemplify the continuous stream of initiatives recently taken by governments to regulate and rationalize education. (p. 21)

In Alberta, increasing supplementary requisitions by school boards have compensated, until now, for recent decreases in provincial educational spending at the elementary and secondary school levels (Decore & Pannu, 1991). However, with the inexorable force of rising cost implications (such as the continuing escalation of energy costs, the rising costs of salaries and insurance (Dentler & Chabotar, 1991)) and the provincial government general freeze on educational grants for 1993-94, Alberta school jurisdictions have been forced to adopt aggressive fiscal management practices which, in the main, they had been able to avoid previously.

It is within this context that this study, aimed at identifying the downsizing strategies adopted by Alberta school jurisdictions in response to financial constraint, was conducted with the intent of understanding the decision-making processes involved and to gain an understanding of the incidence and extent of downsizing activities throughout the province.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the decision-making processes used by school systems in Alberta in selecting specific downsizing strategies as a response to financial constraint.

Statement of Problem

The basic research problem was defined as "determining what information could be obtained about the decision-making process used by school jurisdictions to undertake downsizing."

Research Questions

Within the general scope of the defined problem, the following questions were used to guide the research:

- What is the extent and distribution of downsizing activity in Alberta public school jurisdictions?
- What individual or combination of downsizing strategies (including innovative approaches) are being used by school jurisdictions to meet actual or anticipated requirements of government fiscal constraint?
- Does context, such as demographics and decision motives (that is, whether downsizing decisions are based on the perception of fiscal constraint as a threat or as an opportunity), account for the downsizing strategies adopted by each school jurisdiction?

- What criteria were used in the decision-making process to determine strategies? That is, for example, was the emphasis on efficiency (via selective cuts) or equity (using across the board cuts)?
- What model/typology of decision making from the literature best resembles the process employed by the administrator/s in each school jurisdiction?
- Who participated in the decision-making process in each school jurisdiction?
- What, if any, perceived impact have decisions relating to downsizing had on personnel/employment policies?

Whilst recognizing the validity of Chabotar's (1987) contention that current economic conditions ensure that "every educational decision has become, in part, a financial decision as well" (p. 351), it was decided to focus on decision making relating to downsizing alone for the following reasons:

- such budgetary/personnel decisions concomitantly determine and express an organization's goals (Chaffee, 1983);
- the downsizing phenomenon produces measurable decisions that can be placed into a demographic and environmental context;
- there were some precedents for empirical study of downsizing in the private sector and higher education, but a noticeable lack of current research in the school sector;
- the timeliness of the topic. (The Alberta School Boards Association, the College of Alberta School Superintendents, the Alberta Teachers' Association, and the provincial government all have been preoccupied at various times over the past 18 months with major decision-making activities relating to downsizing);
- earlier studies on "declining schools" concentrated on the effects declining enrollments had on school closure decision making as opposed to

researching the impact of financial constraint on human resources--the implied emphasis in the current spate of organizational downsizings;

- analysis of organizations from the perspective of decision making has been well established as a valid approach to gaining administrative understandings (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1974);
- because the budgetary process is an activity that must be undertaken by every school jurisdiction, facets of that process serve as a basis for comparing variables in the decision-making process: "Few other approaches [than the analysis of decision making] have shown the same power to illuminate the dynamics of organizational life" (Dill, 1964, p. 201); and,
- the way downsizing is managed today will determine the function and design of our educational systems for the future.

Significance of the Study

In their assessment of the impact of the declining Alberta economy on provincial education, Decore and Pannu (1991) indicated that "although the financial constraints on education in Canada have been widely discussed, there has been little analysis of the changes in the policies, structure and organization of education that have accompanied fiscal constraint" (p. 76). The plethora of literature on school decline (due to dwindling enrollments in the eight year period from 1978-85) supported this observation and further identified the need for more to be known specifically about the effectiveness of the decision-making process leading to work force reduction (Greenhalgh, 1982). Zerchykov's (1982) comprehensive review on the management of decline in school systems also identified the significant lack of studies on work force reduction as a decision-making process. More recently, Harrington-Lueker (1992) lamented the fact that obtaining information about downsizing in education seemed almost impossible, despite the recognition by many administrators of a need to understand the new financial realities within which educational administrators must make strategic operational decisions. Weikart (1984) and Rodriguez (1992) lend support for the research requirement in this area by noting respectively that "what is missing from the literature on fiscal scarcity is the recognition of the complexity of the decision-making process" (p. 214), and that "information [is] lacking regarding decision-making processes in school districts" (p. 3). Despite the evidence of some downsizing of school jurisdictions in Canada prior to the current fiscal imperative, there are no reliable data as to the actual number of redundancies/retrenchments, nor where they occurred geographically.

Chaffee (1983) contended that administrators can benefit from post facto analysis of decisions made generally within their organizations or made specifically to certain situations:

> They can consider past decisions that worked out well and those that didn't, determining the extent to which it was the process itself that accounted for success or failure. It is a rare administrator who has never seen a well conceived decision result in unpleasant surprises, often because critical elements of the process were obscured, misunderstood, or forgotten. . . . Administrators can step back from a particular situation and ask, "What is going on here? What process are we actually using? and what assumptions are guiding this process? (p. 8)

She additionally recommended research be undertaken that makes a distinction between the outcome of the decision process and the process itself to determine whether outcomes are identical regardless of the decision process. The uses of knowledge about decision-making processes were further explained by Chaffee as providing decision makers with conceptual tools to analyze and modify their organizational behavior:

> They should be able to recognize what kind of decision process will be most effective for a specific decision opportunity so that they can take steps to encourage the use of the process they believe will be best. When the result is unsatisfactory, they will understand why and be able to make appropriate changes in the decision-making structure itself. (p. 4)

Other proponents of such study and understanding of the decision-making process were Allison (1971), Dill (1964), Estler (1988), Hoy and Miskel (1987), Michaelsen (1981b), Nutt (1984), Pfeffer and Salancik (1974), and Weil (1975). Additionally, Pashiardis and Baker (1992) cited Ansoff's (1984) and Mason and Mitroff's (1981) emphasis on the need to understand decision making emanating from such environmental events as fiscal constraint to be additional impetus for research in this area.

Previous studies in relation to fiscal constraint/resource allocation and decision making in school systems have predominantly depended on fictional case studies as opposed to the real life opportunity provided by the current economic circumstances. Seizing the opportunity, the study was also recognized as having the potential to perform an incidental clearinghouse function by way of the collection and dissemination of information on strategies used by different school jurisdictions in coping with the challenges of fiscally imposed restraint. The analysis of how school jurisdiction administrators perceive political and economic pressures should also help to understand and explain why they act the way they do, as illustrated by Hardy's (1990a) case study analyses of nine British and Canadian organizations that had undergone a variety of retrenchment programs.

Perhaps it was the recognition that increasing economic uncertainty has posed decision making relating to downsizing as one of the major challenges facing contemporary administrators/managers --the results of which often determine an organization's ability to achieve its goals or even survive financially--that gives the study most significance for educational practitioners.

Assumptions

The study was undertaken on the basis of the following assumptions:

- In tracing the decision-making processes as they related to a current administrative problem, what actually happened, as opposed to what was expected to happen, could be empirically discovered.
- Whilst the same downsizing strategies may have been used, different decision-making processes that were consistent with particular contexts may have been used to get there.
- By employing an exploratory and descriptive research design, information about the nature and pattern of decision making relating to downsizing in school jurisdictions could be provided. In this way the study was designed to generate an understanding about school jurisdiction administration rather than test hypotheses about a specific population.
- An analysis of downsizing decision-making processes in school jurisdictions provided a useful way of understanding school jurisdiction administrators' responses to financial constraint.
- Each decision-making model/typology has a rule by which one alternative is chosen rather than another (Chaffee, 1982).
- Downsizing activities and strategies could be identified as separate from other organizational activities and assigned comparative dimensions that enabled them to be assessed in quantitative terms.
- Downsizing serves a function of the organization--whether it be stated simply as cutting costs via salary (ergo staff) reductions or more eloquently as repositioning an organization's human resources to meet future demands more efficiently (Bullock, 1985).
- Downsizing was/is an appropriate response to financial constraint.

- Downsizing an organization can be described as a logical process and to that extent "understood" from a rationalistic perspective (Owens, 1982).
- The personnel who were engaged/involved in decision making relating to downsizing in school jurisdictions did so independently of this study and were able to respond to questions about the activity.
- The rationalistic/functionalist approach to the study could yield explanations and predictions that would assist participants in future decision making relating to downsizing.
- Only by using quantitative methodology as the prime data gathering method could the current situation be revealed.
- The primary reliance upon a questionnaire instrument limited the number of downsizing and decision-making variables that could be initially studied or addressed. (Causal explanations were pursued to a limited extent via post-questionnaire interviews of selected respondents.)
- The study would result in a body of knowledge that could be used to rationalize practice (Hoy & Miskel, 1987).
- The findings could be generalized to other school systems organizationally comparable to those in Alberta (Tatsuoka & Silver, 1988).

The objectivity stated or implied in many of these (sometimes overlapping) assumptions was achieved by use of quantitative methods (Guba, 1990) enunciated in Chapter 3 of this thesis. Qualitative methods were employed to give some depth to the data collected via quantitative instruments.

Delimitations

This study was delimited to:

- The description and exploration of the experiences and perceptions of CEOs and the administrative staff of public school jurisdictions in the province of Alberta.
- Consideration of the contextual factors of school jurisdiction size and administrator's professional background and her/his perception of downsizing as a threat or an opportunity when making decisions (that is, decision motive) only.
- Decision-making processes as defined by the models/typologies gleaned from a search of the decision-making literature formed the basis for identifying the decision-making variables considered.
- Downsizing strategies as defined by a search and review of the literature on downsizing formed the basis for financial constraint variables considered in the comparative analysis of the data.

The study did not consider the *implementation* of downsizing decisions but focused on the organizational behavioral consequences of fiscal constraint (viz. decision making relating to downsizing) and therefore excluded any detailed consideration of issues relating to facilities (such as the school closure induced through declining enrollments) or educational programs.

Only downsizing decisions made in response to the current fiscal imperative were explored; that is, strategies that have been decided upon within the past year or two and were not formulated in response to the enrollment declines of the late 1970s-early 1980s.

Limitations

The study was limited in several respects:

- The data on decision making were limited by participants' perceptions and willingness to record those perceptions on the questionnaire and/or to recall them during interview.
- As the school jurisdictions studied were all from one province, the results need to be interpreted with some caution; generalizations beyond the province, while a distinct purpose of the study, can only be made to the degree that other school systems share contextual features.
- The main unit of analysis was the school jurisdiction, with only limited opportunity for identification of decision-maker characteristics.
- The survey instrument used effectively restricted the variables that could be considered for descriptive and comparative purposes. Alternatively, case studies of specific school jurisdiction downsizings would have permitted in-depth analysis of the phenomenon in political and economic terms (Hardy, 1990a) and/or consideration of how different school systems modify administrative, managerial and instructional programs to accommodate fiscal constraint (Dembowski, Gay, & Owings, 1979; Zerchykov, 1982) as well as presented data on downsizing of school systems in such a way that could have facilitated comparisons with qualitative studies undertaken on downsizings in higher education and the private sector. This study, whilst not using the case study approach, was intended to provide the wider environmental context for such research in the future.

Definitions/Terminology

Emphasis in the following definitions and explication of terms used in the study is placed on operational or behavioral perspectives of the terms and relies heavily on Hardy's (1990a) glossary in *Strategies for Retrenchment and Turnaround: The Politics of Survival.*

Advance notice: early warning of job losses which increases employees' chances of finding new jobs and allows layoffs to be staggered. Advance notice also provides time for outplacement aid and retraining.

Attrition: reduction of personnel by the non replacement of vacant positions. One of the least painful ways of reducing personnel, it is widely recommended as being one of the first responses that should be made to the need for personnel cuts. As a single strategy, it is relatively slow and unlikely to be successful during periods of low turnover in times of economic restraint (Milkovich, Glueck, Barth, & McShane, 1988). It may also result in the loss of positions/functions that would not otherwise have been identified as priorities to be cut.

CEO or chief executive officer is used to refer to superintendents of school jurisdictions, and was selected as the preferred term over "superintendent" in gathering data and reporting the results of this study because of the varying meanings and roles attributed to that title in different education systems and the realization that not all Alberta school jurisdictions were administered by superintendents at the time of the study.

Cutbacks or cuts: reductions in budgets, operations, personnel, etc.

Decline: period during which the organization suffers from reduction in revenue, clients (students), funding, etc.; specifically used in the literature of "school decline" to refer to the period of dwindling enrollments in North America in the eight year period from 1978-85.

Decision motive: refers to how the CEO perceives a strategic issue; either as a threat or an opportunity (Dutton & Jackson, 1987; Pashiardis, 1990).

Dismissal: process whereby an individual loses his or her job; group dismissals signal that job loss is due to financial rather than individual reasons.

Downsizing: "the systematic reduction of a work force by an employer in a variety of ways--usually as a result of some external considerations such as losses, cash flow difficulties and technological changes. . . . Coined originally in reference to scale-downs in car sizes by automobile manufacturers, downsizing was applied to the process of cutbacks when businesses and government agencies began making major reductions to their employee base as a response to recessionary pressures" (Appelbaum, Simpson, & Shapiro, 1987, p. 52).

Early retirement: offer to individuals of a certain length of service to take retirement earlier than the statutory age; an incentive is usually offered and contributions to pensions and other benefits made up to avoid financial penalties to the individual. Early retirement is claimed by some as a way to speed up attrition concomitant with retaining the advantages of not being perceived as a redundancy program. However, Milkovich et al. (1988) warn it may demoralize remaining staff as well as causing the organization to lose its most valued staff. Early retirement can increase access to promotion channels and allow young employees into the organization although Tomasko (1992) reports research findings that this strategy can leave organizations bereft of organization memory, resulting in much reinvention of the wheel. Costs of early retirement can exceed projected labor savings if this option is not carefully managed.

Enforced dismissals/terminations/severance/redundancies/layoffs: group dismissals in which the individuals are selected by the management and have no choice about whether to leave or not.

Job sharing: involves two or more people dividing the responsibility of a single position between them and proves most convenient to employees who wish to work fewer hours at proportionally reduced compensation rates. This strategy has been successfully used for teachers as well as administrative staff.

Outplacement: activities designed to help employees who lose their jobs find new employment. Outplacement provides tangible evidence of the organization's intent to assist employees in their search for new employment. Outplacement aid can include setting up a "job shop" (including electronic bulletin board/newsletter) for posting of vacancies, employing a redeployment manager, provision of training in interview skills, allowing paid time off to attend interviews, organizing job search seminars, retirement and/or financial planning counseling.

Partial retirement: allows employees to retire early (generally without a pension top-up) and to continue work on a part-time basis. This strategy reduces employment costs by only hiring the partially retired person when needed while at the same time having the ability to retain key staff.

Rationalization: reduction of operations, sites, services, etc.

Reduced working hours: such as work sharing and job sharing programs; offers flexibility for employers, enabling them to match the workforce with periods of peak demand.

Retrenchment: reduction in scale or scope of activities; may involve cutbacks, rationalization, closures, layoffs, etc. In the literature on school decline which occurred in the late 1970s, it was most frequently used in reference to school closures if there was a pursuant implication for layoffs.

RIF or reduction in force was the term commonly used during the period of declining enrollments in schools (approximately 1978-85) to describe a particular approach to reducing staff numbers. Rebore (1987) describes the process in some detail: "Excess employees are usually placed on involuntary leave according to a seniority system, which follows the principle of 'last in, first out'. Retained employees may be transferred within the school system to balance a particular staff or faculty" (p. 32).

School decline: when decreasing enrollments result in organizational shrinkage (as opposed to downsizing's emphasis aimed at shrinking the organization to meet financial imperatives, even in the event of increasing enrollments--a fine but important distinction for the purposes of this study).

School district: basic jurisdictional unit for the operation of schools in Canada; "a geographically defined administrative unit managed by a school board. Two school boards distinguished by denomination or language may operate in the same geographical area but are administratively and legally two different entities" (Bezeau, 1989, p. 4).

Turnaround: process whereby a declining organization is restored to health.

Voluntary dismissals/terminations/severance/redundancies/layoffs: refers to the situation where individuals can choose whether to leave the organization, usually upon the offer of some incentive. These strategies have considerable political benefits in protecting the morale and commitment of continuing employees.

Worksharing: introduced specifically (by governments) as a layoff avoidance strategy. All employees in a job group (or work team) work for part of the week and receive unemployment insurance for the remainder. This strategy is only available where social security legislation enables the payment of unemployment insurance for such purposes.

Organization of the Thesis

This initial chapter offered a general introduction to the study of downsizing as a response to financial constraint. In addition to specifying the research questions underlying the study, an account of the study's significance, as well as its delimitation and limitations, was provided. The remainder of the thesis is organized into four chapters.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature related to downsizing and decision making with emphasis on the educational context. The conceptual framework of the study that was derived from the literature concludes the chapter. Chapter 3 outlines the features of the study's design and methodology as well as reports the response rate to the survey under various demographic categories. Chapter 4 begins by presenting financial data obtained from Alberta Education as a precursor to detailing results from the analyses of quantitative and qualitative data collected in the study. Chapter 5 presents a summary, a discussion of the findings reported in Chapter 4, the conclusions drawn from the findings, and recommendations for future research and practice. A bibliography (listing references throughout the thesis and more general works that were consulted) and appendices follow the final chapter.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter presents a review of literature related to the topic of downsizing school jurisdictions. Aimed at situating the exploration of the topic within the context of organizational decision making, the original literature search was somewhat broad, including retrieval of information about organizational change, restructuring of organizations, organizational decision making, administration of school districts, strategic planning, organizational decline and retrenchment/cutback management. The following themes were then focused upon to facilitate the consolidation of selected aspects of those areas for review: (1) downsizing--context, objectives, and strategies; (2) decision-making models/typologies in educational settings--specifically school jurisdictions; and, (3) decision making relating to downsizing. The chapter concludes with the conceptual framework of the study that was derived from the literature review.

Downsizing

By its very definition, downsizing tends to be "an agonizing painful process, an emotional 'hot potato' that most companies try to get behind them as quickly as possible" (Tomasko, 1992, p. 13). For those organizations that care about their employees, it presents a significant dilemma which must be overcome to restore organizational health and viability.

The Economic Context

Whether it is otherwise referred to as retrenchment, resizing, rightsizing, reduction in force (RIF), cutbacks, rationalization, or layoffs, downsizing has been, and seems destined to continue to be, one of the major challenges facing contemporary administrators (Deeprose, 1992; Hardy, 1990a; Laberge, 1990/91; Tomasko, 1992). Cameron and Cheek (1991) suggest that few large organizations have escaped such work force reductions, and that increasing economic uncertainty has intensified the significance of research in this area. Whilst downsizing has traditionally been associated with poor economic conditions, White (1992) proposes its continuing relevance in times of economic growth and low unemployment.

Whilst the economic imperatives for current downsizing activities can be traced back partly to the oil crisis of the early- and mid-1970s (Cross, 1985), it is generally acknowledged that "the rapid diffusion of new technology, privatization of public services, deregulation and the new free trade environment" (Wotherspoon, 1991, p. 20) have been significant contributors to the need for many organizations to take "hard" restructuring decisions. It now appears that successive rounds of cutbacks will be the fate of many organizations that have not taken effective restructuring decisions as part of their initial downsizing strategy (Tomasko, 1992).

Objectives of Downsizing

The economies which downsizing is meant to achieve are rarely accomplished. Tomasko (1992) goes so far as to suggest that most downsizings fail. An international survey of 1 005 organizations conducted in 1991 ("False Economies," 1991) revealed that less than half of the companies surveyed succeeded in meeting their downsizing cost-reduction targets, with the majority of companies reporting "nasty side effects" (such as plummeting morale, loss of valued employees) accompanying their restructuring efforts. Tomasko (1990) observes that implementing downsizing (or streamlining the organization) in a planned manner requires taking a long-term view, which in turn, opens many alternatives to mass layoffs. Organizations that get the greatest benefit out of management and staff reductions have planned downsizings with broader objectives than job elimination.

Appelbaum et al. (1987), Tomasko (1990), and Stoten (1989) agree that one of the biggest challenges facing organizations will be sustaining any hard-won gains from downsizing by not returning to excess staffing levels when economic pressures are eased. In concert with other writers such as Luce (1983) and Hardy (1990a), they propose that organizational planning or restructuring should not be relegated to times of crises, but needs to be recognized as an ongoing activity of top management and should receive prolonged attention to continuous improvement.

Downsizing Strategies

Khan (1987) claims that any responsible employer, whether in the private or public sector, owes it to employees to avoid the harmful effects of dramatic downturns in employment, especially when there are a number of realistic and planned alternatives available. For many organizations, formulating downsizing policies means finding a growing number of ways to get staff work done without putting people on the payroll. To others, it means limiting activities to those in which the value added is greatest and buying what else is needed in the marketplace (Tomasko, 1990).

The most effective approaches to downsizing organizations appear to integrate human resources and strategic planning. Specific employment policies include a number of strategies with emphasis on flexible employment, restructuring (incorporating buffer strategies as discussed in more detail on page 19), and guaranteed continuing employment policies for specific areas (Cascio, 1991). Essentially, there is widespread recognition of the need for organizations to have a management response capability which allows for the rapid evaluation of, and response to, unforeseen perturbations in the workload and/or fiscal imperatives (Aguilar, Niehaus, & Sharkey, 1991).

The existing literature on downsizing provides excellent details on specific downsizing strategies (see Chabotar & Honan, 1990; Duignan & Ponder, 1978; Hardy, 1990a; Mingle, 1981; Tomasko, 1990, 1992), the most prevalent of which are summarized in the definitions/terminology section in the previous chapter of this thesis. Of the various alternatives available, Hardy (1990a) does alert administrators to the great danger in focusing on the short term economic strategies to the detriment of considering the long term political components of any organizational upheaval, such as conflict management and employee commitment.

Other writers, such as Milkovich et al. (1988), emphasize the advantages of buffer employment strategies, such as those used by Control Data Corporation, as a means of limiting the impact of downsizing strategies on both the employees and the organization. As illustrated in Figure 2.1, buffer or "rings of defense" strategies can be used to avoid or minimize layoffs during financial constraint by first cutting overtime, then calling back work subcontracted to outside vendors. Next, supplemental and part-time employees are dismissed. Control Data Corporation's "inner rings of defense" (illustrated in Figure 2.2 and including such strategies as hiring freezes, voluntary layoffs, dismissal of poor performers) are layoff programs affecting full-time employees.

The flexible employment policies proposed by Milkovich et al. (1988) and used by an increasing number of organizations, would also seem to assure that when downsizing is necessary, priorities for staff reduction which can assist in achieving downsizing goals have already been established. According to Deeprose (1992), the lack of anticipated gains from downsizing has generally resulted from too much attention being focused on eliminating unnecessary jobs and on outplacing people and not enough attention devoted to either contracting out or cutting unnecessary work. This sentiment is supported by many of the reports in the literature; it appears that often when the workforce has been cut, all the work and the old procedures have been retained.

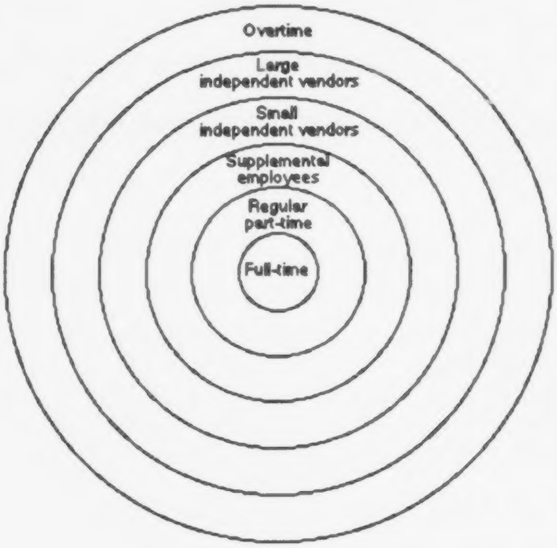
Overtime
Large independent vendors
Small independent vendors
Supplemental employees
Regular part-time
Full-time

Figure 2.1

Buffer Employment Strategies
(Control Data Corporation in Milkovich, Glueck, Barth, and McShane, 1988, p. 259)

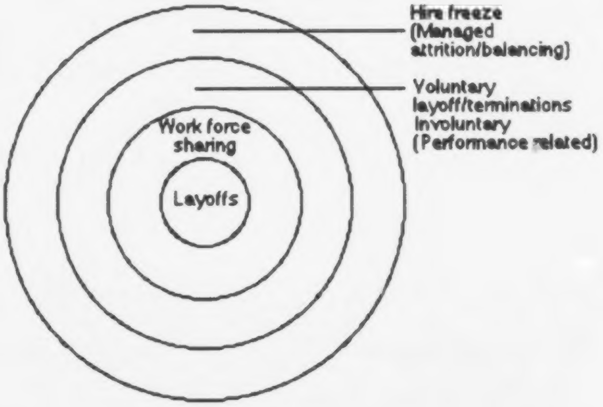
Hire freeze (Managed attrition/balancing)
Voluntary layoff/terminations Involuntary (Performance related)
Work force sharing
Layoffs

Figure 2.2

Inner Rings of Defense
(Control Data Corporation in Milkovich, Glueck, Barth, and McShane, 1988, p. 260)

In the aforementioned survey reported in *Report on Business Magazine* ("False Economies," 1991), only 42% of organizations choosing to downsize began their restructure by identifying and eliminating low-value work. Their tendency to use early retirement programs as an alternative generally resulted in the loss of good performers along with the "deadwood" and a consequent need (in 83% of the surveyed organizations) then to replace some of the people originally let go. Tomasko (1992) reported similar results from another study in which less than half of the companies that downsized took steps to eliminate low-value work with subsequent pressures to restaff as soon as possible and on survivors of the cutbacks to cope with an unchanged or increased workload. Those observations caused Tomasko to suggest that "lasting changes in [an organization's] administrative cost structure require rethinking the basic structure, not just whittling away at its edges" (p. 13).

Where successful downsizing has been reported it has generally been attributed to:

- extensive consultation and communication on a downsizing policy/program (including the establishment of consultative committees for problem solving and the issuing of frequent bulletins);
- the provision of outplacement aid/ counseling;
- advance notice of downsizing program (attrition then accounted for a percentage of reductions);
- using voluntary severance to achieve payroll savings;
- the provision of generous redundancy compensation;
- experience gained in previous downsizing exercises had sensitized managers to the issues involved; and,
- an integrated system of personnel policies and practices (usually negating the need for the other factors).

The Educational Context

While there has been significant research on downsizing/restructuring processes of institutions within the higher education sector over the past decade (Chabotar & Honan, 1990; Dawson, 1991; Ell, 1988; Gardner, Warner, & Biedenweg, 1990; Hardy, 1990b, 1992; Kloss, 1985; Laberge, 1990/91; Langfitt, 1990; Monahan, Denemark, Egbert, Giles, & McCarty, 1983; Norman, 1983; Pawlak, 1992; Rush, 1992; Savage, 1984; Savenije & Otten, 1986; Sizer, 1988; Smith, 1986; Zemsky & Massy, 1990), there is little evidence of similar commitment to the study of the process of downsizing in educational systems (viz. school jurisdictions). The very notable exception to this generalization is the research specific to cutbacks between 1978 and 1985 when "about four in every five of the more than 15 000 public school districts in the United States experienced declining enrollments " (Chabotar & Honan, 1985, p. 223) and similar demographic patterns occurred throughout school systems in Canada, the United Kingdom and other western democracies. However, as reported by Zerchykov (1982), of the 250 references he reviewed about the first part of this period, there was a relatively limited richness of information on the processes of responding to decline and the impact of those responses. Little seems to have changed since his summation of the situation at that time. Zerchykov's review also revealed the heavy emphasis on school closures and educational program issues as opposed to human resource issues: "Advice on the issue of RIF is quite restrained and restricted. That is, there isn't as much 'how to' material in the literature as there is, for example, on school closure" (Zerchykov, 1982, p. 64), which, he concluded, may have been due to legislative constraints and local collective bargaining agreements in place at that time. Where staffing implications were dealt with, it was generally on the need for retraining staff and the relationship between staff reduction and seniority. Similarly, Hewton (1986), writing on financial constraint in British school jurisdictions at the same time, noted that "a cuts culture is not associated with termination (as when a company is officially wound up). . . . Rather, it is a culture which is linked to extended periods of marginal contraction" (p. 127), with a consequential emphasis on the social climate resulting from a deteriorating physical environment and erosion of the curriculum.

In that same context of enrollment decline, Chabotar and Dentler (1985) suggested that "the implications of retrenchment for reducing staff, deferring maintenance, reorganizing grade structures, cutting materials and equipment, and reducing co-curricular activities" (p. 230) were approached by all but a few of the most knowledgeable actors as issues that were independent from resources; a situation very different to that (such as the present) in which downsizing is blatantly related to fiscal constraint. Their engagement as external consultants to declining school districts at that time did, however, identify some significant generalizations pertinent to the "new wave" of downsizings under consideration in this study:

> In an effort to help the district 'do more with less,' it is often necessary to recommend administrative reorganizations at the district and school levels. These changes are intended not only to reduce overhead expenditures but also to improve system management and educational program delivery. They involve school board-administrator relationships, teacher participation in decision making, and the role of the business office in managing the school system. (p. 234)

Chabotar and Dentler's detailed approach to providing technical assistance for planning cutback management, including commentary on remedial aspects of the consultancies in which they were involved, provides a useful historical context for contemporary educational administrators.

Smith (1986), while writing about downsizing of educational institutions (as opposed to systems/jurisdictions), does highlight a number of more general features. He suggests part of the reluctance in education to plan for downsizing may be due, in part, to a fear of the self-fulfilling prophecy and purports that such resistance should be overcome by aggressive downsizing which would lessen organizational decline. Chabotar and Honan's (1990) experience appears to support Smith's perception that educational organizations resist planning for downsizing; they see such failure as a form of organizational denial which consequently seems to lead to last minute cutbacks and exacerbate the harm to operations and morale.

Siegel and Smoley (1989) conclude that despite the cultural differences, education confronts many of the same restructuring/downsizing issues as does the private sector. They note that education leaders have generally been wary of applying business management principles to educational administration, specifically in regard to private sector restructuring decisions. However, they also propose what they believe is a workable strategy for incorporating private sector participation in educational downsizing/restructuring:

> In education, parallels with corporate downsizing are already evident. Middle management has its natural counterpart in school district central office personnel. Where districts decentralize responsibilities to each school site and expand teachers' professional responsibilities, the central office may not need as many instructional specialists. As school systems seek to accelerate their decision-making capabilities by flattening their organizational structures, they can reduce central office staff. . . . Thus, it is central office personnel in school systems, much like their white collar counterparts in private companies, who are most vulnerable to downsizing and who are most likely to resist it. (p. 5)

Oehm (1991) supports the suggestion that school jurisdictions now moving to site-based management will be expected to downsize central administration and shift resources to the school site. He proposes that organizations which downsize in an orderly and rational manner can "dramatically revive their sinking budget balances" (p.23) and similarly identifies the targets as staff employed in the administrative or support areas as well as middle management.

Harwood (1991) recognizes a number of differences between the public and private sector, in that public workforces, such as in school jurisdictions, are shrunk only with great difficulty and persistence. He maintains inertia is brought about by widely shared expectations about permanence and stability and highlights the concepts generated by the public service culture about careers and the hierarchy of prestige and power--concepts that are maintained by way of structures--the implication being that any downsizing must be accompanied by structural change.

Decision Making

In reviewing the literature on decision making, it must be acknowledged that there is no want of material, for it is a well worked arena. On that basis, it was necessary to set some boundaries for the review and to select an approach that not only kept the task in manageable proportions, but would also provide an adequate focus for the study. To that end, the review concentrates on briefly describing a number of organizational decision-making models/typologies so as to provide a basic background for determining what model/typology of decision making from the literature is most suitable for assessing the decisions made by school jurisdiction administrators in downsizing their organizations. An overview of decision making in the educational context--specifically local school jurisdictions--then serves to present the context for the study.

To Simon (1965), decision making is not only synonymous with managing, it is also defined as "becoming alert to a problem, exploring it and analyzing the different components of the problem and finally deciding on a course of action" (p. 36). Such a perspective is endorsed by Griffiths (1959) and Allison (1989), both of whom propose that administration *is* decision making and that the administrator's control rests not in personally making decisions but in controlling the way in which decisions are made. More specifically explained, a decision is "the selection of a course of action from among two or more alternatives. The decision-making process is simply the sequence of steps leading to that selection" (Sisk & Williams, 1981, p. 106).

Decision-making theory is seen by Pettigrew (1973) to fall into two broad categories: the normative mathematical-economic theories and the behavioral theories. It is the second of these two approaches that provides the broad context of this study, and whilst it is acknowledged that few administrators use formal decision-making models in their work (Owens, 1987), it is also argued that understanding how the process of decision making is responsive to the contingencies of the environment (Bess, 1988; March & Miklos, 1983) has become an imperative for contemporary educational administrators responding to current economic and social conditions.

Strategic Decision Making

Of the various organizational decision-making strategies identified in the literature, strategic decision making is the one recognized by the greatest number of authors as being relevant for an organization involved in matching its activities to the environment and its resource capability (such as school jurisdictions undertaking downsizing to meet fiscal imperatives) (Bacharach, Bamberger, Conley, & Bauer, 1990; Barnett & Wilsted, 1988; Chaffee, 1983; Johnson, 1987). Studies of the strategic decision-making process have variously identified it as functioning within a number of other decision-making models/typologies, with Collier (1981) noting that since Drucker's initial definition of strategic decision making there have been almost as many different definitions of the concept as there have been writers on the subject.

Whilst the major part of the literature on strategic decision making seems to have evolved within the context of strategic planning, Collier (1981) cites the work of Chandler (1962) and Ansoff (1965) in arguing that "strategy" is most appropriately applied in the context of decision making. There does seem to be some general agreement amongst the numerous authors that strategic decisions "essentially create the future of the organization by positioning it within its environment and moving it through time" (Collier, 1981, p. 5)--what Drucker (1954) refers to as the "futurity" aspect of decision making:

> One of the most important factors of strategic decision making is its focus on preparing the organization to cope with change. . . .While there is fairly widespread agreement that strategic decision making helps the organization cope with change, there is less agreement regarding how it does it. The most common view on how strategies should cope with change is characterized as a proactive, opportunistic, action-oriented approach [underlining in original]. (Collier, 1981, p. 17)

While the preceding quotation suggests that strategic decisions should be opportunity motivated, Dutton and Jackson (1987) recognize that such a positive perspective is not always taken by decision makers and that entirely different strategic decision-making processes and assumptions will be utilized according to what label is used (threat or opportunity):

> Several authors (Aharoni, 1966; Dutton, Fahey, Narayanan, 1983; Fredrickson, 1985; Mintzberg, Raisinghani and Theoret, 1976; Nutt, 1984) have suggested that the decision processes that managers employ in response to threats are very different from the processes that are motivated by opportunities. Managers expect decision motives that they characterize as opportunities to have significant positive effects on their organizations. The contrary is expected when managers are faced with what they characterize as threats. (p. 19)

It is the uncertainty of decision making that forces decision makers to label the issues they are confronted with in an effort to reduce that uncertainty and/or put their thoughts into perspective. It is also recognized that labeling an issue either as a threat or an opportunity may influence who gets involved in an issue, what kind of information gathering is used, and how much risk decision makers are willing to take (Pashiardis, 1990). Prospect theory (people are willing to risk more to avoid the loss of a particular amount than they risk to gain the same amount) was developed by Tversky and Kahneman (1981) and implies that strategic decision makers will take greater risks in response to threats rather than opportunities.

Johnson (1987) cites the work of Lindblom (1959) and others to expand upon the perception of strategic decision making as an incremental process where successive limited comparisons build strategy; a "succession of decisions approximating to some desired objectives themselves continuing to change under reconsideration" (p. 32). Logical incrementalism occurs when decision makers accept the ambiguities and uncertainty of their environment and undertake constant environmental scanning. The incrementalist view also holds that the strategy is worked out through being put into operation. Characterized as "muddling through" (Callahan, Fleenor, & Knudson, 1986), incrementalism does not have goals and objectives that are established prior to decision analysis but "rather a feasible course of action emerges as alternatives and consequences of action are explored" (Hoy & Miskel, 1987, p. 330).

Strategic issues are also credited with imbuing decision making with the kind of useful tension necessary to prompt organizational change (Bryson, 1988) or necessary to prompt revision of personnel practices:

> Strategic issues that emerge from the juxtaposition of internal and external factors--and that involve organizational survival, prosperity, and effectiveness--can provide just the kind of tension that will focus the attention of key decision makers on the need for change. They will be particularly attentive to strategic issues that entail severe consequences if they are not addressed. (p. 141)

Drucker (1954) also presented strategic decisions as those that "really matter," that "aim at changing the whole situation" (p. 351). Along with McGrath (1986), he identified that in strategic decision making, the important and difficult job is never to find the right answer; it is to find the right question.

Pettigrew (1973) links strategic decision making to the political model of decision making (briefly outlined on page 32) and proposes that for however long organizations continue as resource sharing systems in which there is a scarcity of those resources, political behavior will occur. Similarly, Johnson (1987) whilst including strategic decision making in the realm of rationality (and consequently the rational model of decision making--see page 31) concedes that it is "characterized by the political hurly-burly of organizational life with a high incidence of bargaining, a trading off of costs and benefits of one interest group against another, all within an organizational context with a notable lack of clarity in terms of environmental influences or objectives" (Johnson, 1987, p. 19).

The case for strategic decision making being political and consensual (as presented by McGrath (1986)) recognizes that strategic decision making accepts the political emphasis on issues and seeks to inform the formulation and resolution of those issues (Bryson, 1988). In highlighting the political facets of strategic decision making, Hegarty and Hoffman (1987) describe it as a fluid process with different stake holders dominating the process depending on the strategic issue being considered (p. 80).

Chaffee (1983), in offering advice on participative decision making, points out "that while strategic decisions should be structured on the rational model, which requires central authority, they may also be decentralized through broad participation in the decision-making process, if such participation is entered into in good faith" (p. 4). She also suggests participation should be most limited when the decision is urgent, when not important, when specialized expertise is required, or when decision makers intend to ignore the contribution anyhow. According to Cope (1981) and McGrath (1986), strategic decisions are actually dependent upon adaptable and participatory group processes for implementation.

Strategic decision making, because of its concern not only with the long-term direction of an organization, but also the previously mentioned aim of matching an organization's activities to the environment and its resource capability, is claimed by Johnson (1987) to converge with the rational model of decision making. From the research by Mintzberg and Lyles, Johnson (1987) identified four generalizable stages that can be recognized specific to the strategic decision-making process: *problem* *awareness* (the recognition that a state of affairs exists that needs remedying); *problem diagnosis* (the collection of information about, and examination of, the circumstances of the problem and the definition of the problem); *development of solutions* (the generation of possible solutions to the problem); and *selection of a solution* (the means by which a decision about what is done is to be reached) (p. 23). He further notes that *problem awareness,* whilst perhaps preceded by an administrator's "gut feeling" that something will have to be done about an issue, is often triggered when the formal information systems of the organization highlight the problem--quite often through the budget process (Johnson, 1987, p. 25), as is likely to be the case with downsizing.

Whilst *problem diagnosis* is often aided by information gathering, Johnson (1987) argues that information is subject to misrepresentation and often collected to symbolize a commitment to rational choice. He notes the *development of solutions* phase is usually time consuming and resource demanding and that ready-made solutions from previous experience are the first to be considered anyway:

> Researchers consistently point out that in the process of strategic decision making there is a much greater reliance on managerial judgment and past experience than the evaluative techniques of the management scientist would suggest. If evaluation does take place it is likely to be qualitative in nature, perhaps taking the form of a discussion of problems or options among the managers. What becomes clear is that the selection of strategy is primarily by means of management judgment and is likely to be bound up in a process of bargaining within the organization. Solutions . . . are adopted . . . because they are acceptable to those who influence the decision or have to implement it. (p. 29)

Nutt (1984) agrees that executive decision makers prefer to copy the ideas of others, search for ready made solutions, or endeavor to find a historical precedent, instead of seeking innovation, in part due to Mintzberg's (1973) observation that there is often a demand by decision makers for concrete ideas as soon as possible in the process.

Other Models/Typologies

Of the other widely identified models of decision making, it is the rational and political that are most often aligned with strategic issues.

Rational

The rational model uses a rational-deductive approach to decision making that begins with goals, from whence are derived the policies, programs and actions to achieve those goals (Bryson, 1988, p. 67). This approach has also been called "linear" (Chaffee 1983), the "planning mode" (Mintzberg, 1973, cited in Johnson 1987) and "synoptic" (Frederickson, 1983, cited in Johnson 1987).

Simon (1965) proposed three phases in rational decision making: intelligence activity (searching the environment to reveal the circumstances that call for a decision); design activity (the envisioning, development and analysis of alternative courses of action); and choice activity (selecting a course of action from among the options under consideration). Implicit within this model are: that strategic decision-making is the property of "top-managers"; and that decision making is neat, rational, logical and understandable (Johnson, 1987, p. 16).

Perceived limitations to the rational approach led to the proposal of an alternative bounded rational model that emphasizes the need for managers to make decisions with incomplete information, under time pressures, and when there may be disagreements over goals (Butler, 1991, p. 46). This is the model advocated by Cyert and March (1963) and is inclusive of the recognition that disjointed and incremental decision making often occurs (Lindblom, 1959, cited in Butler, 1991). Butler (1991, p. 49) differentiates between the usefulness of the rational and the bounded rational decision processes by suggesting that the rational model is more appropriate for routine decisions and that the bounded rational model for non routine decisions or decisions within a "fuzzy" organizational structure.

Bureaucratic

Grounded in the observations of Weber (1947):

> the processes of decision making in this model are decentralized to persons at the lowest possible organizational levels appropriate to the type of decision, with recourse to persons in positions at upper levels when insufficient expertise exists below. Conflict is presumed to be temporary and resolvable through the acknowledged, legitimate hierarchy. (Bess, 1988, p. 3)

A bureaucratic perspective on decision making is most often combined with the rationalistic to be labeled rational/bureaucratic.

Political

The political decision-making model is inductive and first received impetus in the management literature through the work of Cyert and March (1963) and Baldridge (1971) with the notion of incompatible differences (conflict) among organizational participants as its basic element:

> In the political model, the division of labor, endemic to complex organizations, constrains workers to displace goals and to "suboptimize" around subunits rather then the organization as a whole. Combined with accompanying breakdowns in communication that "limit their rationality", workers, proponents of this school suggest, will invariably find themselves in conflict with one another. The resolution of those conflicts in turn, will take the form of bargaining and politics, in contrast to organizationally rational decision making under the bureaucratic model or consensus formation under the collegial. (Bess, 1988, p. 4)

The political model of organizational decision making recognizes that organizations are made up of "shifting coalitions of interests and temporary alliances of decision makers who can, for the purpose of a decision, come together and sufficiently submerge their differences to make a decision" (Butler, 1991, p. 51).

Organized Anarchy

Cohen and March's (1974) "organized anarchy" model is more a loosely connected set of propositions about structure and process in organizations as opposed to a "model":

> The idea that organizations may be more or less anarchic seems to have arisen in response to the frustrations of many in the field of organizational behavior who were unable to establish with any reasonable degree of certainty cause and effect relationships among key structural or processual variables. This has led to the recognition that in many organizations, connections among organizational participants or units are "loosely coupled" (Weick, 1976) and that the culture of the organization--its norms, values, latent goals, hidden agendas, idiosyncratic characteristics--plays a far greater role than previously imagined (cf. Deal & Kennedy, 1982). Cohen and March (1974) have attempted most provocatively to describe this amorphous quality of organizational life. (Bess, 1988, p. 5)

The organized anarchy decision-making process is characterized by the "fluid participation" of organizational members: for some decisions any decision maker can take part in the decision; for other decisions, the boundaries for participation are set by hierarchical position in the organization; for still others, who will participate is determined by the particular decision rather than the structure.

Garbage Can

Cohen, March and Olsen (1972) conceptualized the decision process as a garbage can--as members of an organization generate problems and solutions, they dump them into the garbage can. This model envisions problems, decision participants, choice opportunities and solutions to be swirling around in a "decision space" combining in non-rational ways (Callahan et al., 1986, p. 251).

Nutt (1984) suggests that in the garbage can model, because managers do not know what they want until they see what they can get, solutions are used to formulate problems. Estler (1988) suggests that this model is most appropriate when opportunities stimulate decision making:

> In a garbage can process, decisions are the product of the confluence of four relatively independent streams at a given time:
>
> 1. Choice opportunities: occasions in which the organization is expected to produce a decision, such as the signing of contracts, hiring, firing, approval of budgets, and allocation of responsibilities. They represent metaphorical garbage cans, which attract available problems, solutions, participants, depending on availability and the existence and attractiveness of competing choice opportunities.
>
> 2. Problems: the concerns of people inside and outside the organization, including non-choice related issues such as family problems, career and status, interpersonal conflicts, and ideology.
>
> 3. Solutions: somebody's product or an answer looking for a question, such as computers, a management information system, a new employee, and in the world at large, Velcro.
>
> 4. Participants: those entering and leaving a decision arena as dictated by competing demands on time, "rights of participation" as determined by organizational structure, norms, interest and duty. (p. 312)

Case studies that have explored aspects of the garbage can process have shown "the power of this perspective in making sense of behaviors and processes that would be unexplained variance in or simply unidentified by other models" (Estler, 1988, p. 313).

Collegial

The collegial model borrows the assumptions of the human resources school (Miles, 1965; Millett, 1978) and

> assumes individuals can be induced to participate fully and be committed to the achievement of organizational ends. . . . The structures of decision making under the collegial model appear, therefore, to be rather cumbersome, redundant, and inefficient, as participation tends to be fluid and permissive, rather than constrained by organizational means. Decision-making processes in collegial organizations also tend to be more discursive, rather than parsimonious, as all interested parties must be given opportunities to have their say, both formally and informally. (Bess, 1988, p. 3)

This model was named for colleges and universities where it has been traditionally assumed that most decisions are made by faculty who are willing to engage in reasonable discussion in order to reach their common goal. Chaffee (1983) suggests that whilst this model may apply to academic decisions, it does not appear to describe the non academic decisions which are the greatest problems for administrators (p. 16).

Participative

In agreeing with Owens (1987), Johns (1988) argues for participative decision making as producing decisions of better quality than those reached by even highly capable individuals. He also indicates that the process does not depend on involving everyone in every decision but rather involving stakeholders only in those decisions relevant to their livelihood and professional performance, that is, those decisions within their "zone of sensitivity" (Owens, 1987, p. 289).

Participative decision making often involves the creation of committees or task forces. However, groups seldom work quickly or efficiently, may generate conflict, may fall victim to groupthink (Hoy & Miskel, 1987), and advise riskier courses of action than individuals would take (Johns, 1988).

These cautions are reinforced by warnings from Dill (1964) and Conway (1984) that participative decision making does not always bring positive results and/or satisfaction with involvement, and by Estler (1988) that there is little empirical support linking participation and decision outcomes. However, proponents such as Conley, Schmidle, and Shedd (1988) claim that research confirms that participation is

> indeed associated with a number of positive outcomes that can ultimately benefit an employer, including greater employee morale and satisfaction, organizational commitment and acceptance of change, and cooperation and reduction of conflict. There is an important caveat, however, that involving employees in decision making does not, in and of itself, guarantee the aforementioned results. Rather, the outcomes of employee participation appear to depend on a variety of contextual and intervening factors. (p. 260)

The model's underlying values and beliefs appear to ensure its continuing popularity.

Vroom and Yetton's decision-making guidelines for participation (Callahan et al., 1986; Hoy & Miskel, 1987; Owens, 1987) propose that the selection of a decision style should be based upon problem attributes, the need for quality in the decision, and the need for acceptance by people who implement the decision.

Collaborative processes and relationships also receive some attention in the recent literature as important components in involving people in decision making and are recognized by Lieberman (1986) as being both old and new; old because people have written about and experienced success in using such processes for some time, and new because the current environment requires organizations to confront the necessity for working together. Collaborations could be seen as a subset of the participatory model, although the literature does suggest that collaboration involves finding better solutions to complex problems by participants gaining understanding of the complexities and "acting on them in an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect" (Lieberman, 1986, p. 6), whereas the wider concept of participation may well involve conflict, cynicism, and any number of interpersonal characteristics other than trust and respect. Collaborations may be small or large, heavily funded, or not funded at all; they may be organized by a group within an organization, or by an organization seeking involvement from the wider community. The forms of collaborative processes are as varied as the numbers and kinds of people involved and may be best thought of as relationships which encourage a much broader stake in decision making. Increased attention to collaboration within the educational sphere in particular (De Bevoise, 1986) has led to the development of a collaborative decision-making model (Donaldson & Christiansen, 1990), for specific application in teaching. A more general empirically derived model for elucidation of administrative/ management processes does not appear to exist.

Administrative

The administrative model of decision making is a "satisficing" strategy (first introduced by Herbert Simon (1965)) whereby the decision maker establishes an adequate level of acceptability for a solution and then screens solutions until one that exceeds this level is found (Johns, 1988, p. 393). This perspective is based on the assumption that: "the decision-making process is a cycle of events that includes the identification and diagnosis of a difficulty, the reflective development of a plan to alleviate the difficulty, the initiation of the plan, and the appraisal of its success" (Hoy & Miskel, 1987, p. 317). The inclusion of the cyclical aspect means that the process can result in incremental gains and progress, and that it can be entered into at any stage.

This model also assumes that "complete rationality in decision making is virtually impossible; therefore administrators seek to satisfice because they do not have the knowledge, ability or capacity to maximize the decision-making process" (Hoy & Miskel, 1987, p. 318); hence most administrative decision making is concerned with the selection and implementation of satisfactory alternatives rather than optimal alternatives; that is, using Simon's word, administrators "satisfice" rather than "optimize".

Conclusion

While the foregoing brief summaries of the more commonly identified models/typologies have been presented for comparative purposes, it should be noted that the models do not supplant one another but are complementary in explaining a range of decision-making processes (Estler, 1988, p. 316). Chaffee (1982) highlights the use of decision-making models/typologies in studies such as this for being helpful "analytic devices that serve as templates through which decision processes may be categorized, understood and evaluated" (p. 3) and compares what she claims are the most prevalent models on the following basis:

1) rational: directed by values, based on supporting data

2) bureaucratic: directed by traditional values

3) political: directed by conflicting self interests and power

4) anarchical: directed by accidents of timing and interest

5) collegial: directed by consensus.

Estler (1988) also has suggested that models provide useful implications for practice when that guidance is conditional to specific circumstances (such as is the case with downsizing):

> Over time, the prescriptions offered by each of the perspectives have become more contextual and realistic, in acknowledgment of the situational nature and ambiguities inherent in educational organizations.
>
> Though the ambiguities of educational decision making cannot be eliminated, they can be made more understandable and less threatening. By understanding a variety of approaches to decision making and the range of organizational conditions under which they may be applicable, the administrator can be better prepared to respond to, and even enjoy, organizational ambiguity and complexity. (p. 316)

Decision Making in School Jurisdictions

Application of Models/Typologies

Estler (1988), in her review of educational decision making, addresses the application of the previously reviewed models, in many instances, to school systems comparative in their administrative structures with those of this study, and thereby provides a framework on which to build this section of the literature review. In first considering the validity of the rational (and rational-bureaucratic) model in this setting, she notes that while such processes have served a basic function in the field, they may in fact be largely symbolic to the extent that they provide "the appearance of rationality to processes necessarily surrounded by ambiguity" (p. 308). Her specific application of the model claims that:

> Rational-bureaucratic assumptions accurately reflect the context of many educational decisions. School systems can, in fact be seen as formal hierarchies with clear chains of command and defined responsibilities. Many decision problems faced by those bureaucracies can be characterized in terms of clearly defined goals, knowable alternatives, and identifiable consequences for those alternatives. Particularly tasks typically considered as managerial can be defined in those terms, such as the development and monitoring of budgets, ordering of supplies, formal hiring processes, facility maintenance, scheduling and development of new facilities. (p. 308)

Wimpelberg and Boyd's (1990) attempt to correlate specific decision-making models with school jurisdiction decision-making processes proposes that bureaucratically and professionally based approaches to decision making must coexist in schools and school jurisdictions. This idea meets with some concurrence from Tucker and Zeigler (1980) who concluded that the preponderant form of decision making in the school jurisdictions they had studied was that of the hierarchical or technological model (namely, rational-bureaucratic): "Experts dominate laymen . . . the overall picture is one of public and school board deference to educational experts" (Greene, 1992, p. 233). McGlashan and Singleton (1987) support the notion that in rational decision making in the school district, the CEO is acknowledged as the major strategist, but they also indicate that others are expected to contribute to the strategic decision-making process.

In relation to the political model, Estler notes that in the educational setting this model must take into account competing interests, formal and informal power, and the effect of the external environment. Therefore, where there is citizen participation (such as that by board members) in educational policy, this model assumes increased relevance; it assumes decisions are the outcome of bargaining among competing interests, where scarce resources and competing interests determine that bargaining will be the basic process for producing decisions, though the decisions often reflect compromise and tradeoffs brought about by deadline pressures.

Political models have received considerable research attention at the school system level (Bacharach & Mitchell, 1981; Estler, 1988), often in respect of collective bargaining and professionalization. The political model appears to provide a clearer understanding of the process of decision making among competing interests at the school system level, as in the selection of a school superintendent (Estler, 1988, p. 311) and the budgetary process.

On the basis that they do not have specific and clear goals, nor a well-defined technology and are characterized by fluid participation (by students, teachers, administrators, parents), Cohen et al. (1972) propose that educational organizations typify the organized anarchy model of decision making. Although the concepts on which this model was based were developed from research conducted in a university setting, there has been little dispute that they are applicable to educational organizations at large (Owens, 1987). Estler (1988) cites the work of March (1982), Meyer & Rowan (1977), and Weick (1982) in asserting that the organized anarchy view (incorporating the notion of a garbage can decision process) considers decision making not only relative to rational means-ends chains but does so in terms of symbolism, myths and rituals, and on this basis has proved useful for considering the effects of the process that have little to do with the outcome. By way of explanation, Estler provides the example of how the choice of participants in the selection of a new superintendent may be more of an organizational ritual (in signaling who in the district matters) rather than the involvement of those who could effect the best decision outcome.

Estler's claim that participatory models are best considered as a subset of rational-bureaucratic models is based on the common assumptions of both models being dependent upon shared goals, goal-driven choice based on information, professional expertise and organizational structure. According to Cuban (1984) the claim to professionalism among teachers has continued to keep the theme of participatory decision making alive.

Whereas it has been found that if there is no personal stake in the decision, subordinates typically will be receptive to a decision made by administrators, Hoy and Miskel (1987) still make a claim for participative decision making having been found to be effective when administrators have involved teachers in decisions located outside their zone of acceptance. However, they do warn that there needs to be an assessment of the extent to which teachers are qualified to make useful contributions to the identification or solution of the problem, maintaining that to involve subordinates in decisions that are outside their experience and competence is likely to cause them unnecessary frustration (p. 339). Conway's (1984) review of participative decision making in education dispels many of the myths arising from research in that area and emphasizes his conclusion that teachers do not view their role in decision making in the same way in all situations; too much participation is seen almost as detrimental as too little; and satisfaction is related to the issues at hand. Conley et al. (1988), similarly warn the "in education, studies suggest that teachers frequently view participation at best as a meaningless exercise and at worst as a manipulative tool" (p. 261) concomitant with presenting a compelling case for increased participation of teachers in district strategic decision making through such less traditional means as quality circles and other emerging collaborative processes.

Additional claims for the manifestation of various decision-making models in the school jurisdictional setting include Michaelsen's (1981a) identification of loose coupling as characterizing the conduct of such processes and Lieberman's (1986) claim for collaborative processes (though not specifically linked to a decision-making model) as being of assistance in resolving complex issues.

Decision-Making Processes Specific to the Setting

In Canada, "school jurisdictions vary in size and shape and in the organization of the controlling board, but the common element of all is that they are recipients of the delegated authority from the Legislature through the Department of Education" (Giles & Proudfoot, 1990, p. 56). With a few exceptions, each jurisdiction has a locally appointed Superintendent, who, as CEO, is responsible for the overall administration of education for that jurisdiction. Each jurisdiction also has an elected school board which operates as a corporate body and is responsible for policy-level decisions such as budget development and some curricular matters (Giles & Proudfoot, 1990). School jurisdictions are essentially structurally autonomous regarding personnel and financial matters. Traditionally, the main interest and function of school boards was considered to be financing education. This has changed, but obviously financial matters are still a priority inasmuch as they have an impact on the educational program. In a climate of decreasing government financial support, Giles and Proudfoot (1990) note that the modern school jurisdiction of the 1990s is subject to a number of stresses/pressures that make traditional decision making inadequate. The locus of power in the decision-making process also appears to be changing and/or to be perceived by different writers as being functionally specific.

Giles & Proudfoot (1990) propose that although school boards hold the ultimate power and responsibility for the operation of local schools, it is the executives, advisors, administrators and teachers (the professionals) who have the task "to inform and provide advice in the decision-making/policy-making activities of the board, and to do the actual work, planning, organizing, implementing and teaching" (p. 61). Such a statement supports Bacharach's (1981) claim that:

> In effect, elected officials, despite their part-time, unsalaried status, are the main source of authority. . . . The main responsibility of their appointed counterparts--the superintendent and his staff--is to implement policy . . . [alternatively], since the superintendent and his staff enjoy certain bureaucratic advantages, expertise, greater control over material resources, and immediate access to valuable information, the crucial decisions in a school district are made at staff meetings, not board meetings. The school board, consequently, . . . [is] an agency of legitimation (p. 6),

and is in accord with Chambers' (1975) assertion that school jurisdiction decision making is dominated by the superintendent and high-level administrators.

However, Giles and Proudfoot (1990) suggest the school board chairperson is also a key player, rather than just an agent of legitimacy, in the decision-making process. While they recognize that operational policies directed toward the functional effectiveness of the school system, in such areas as personnel administration and financial management, most often arise from professional decision making, they also note that such policies are usually made in the form of a resolution or a motion prepared largely by the administrative staff for at least pro forma approval by the board (Michaelsen, 1981a). It is at this juncture where they claim the influence of the school board chairperson can be very significant (Giles & Proudfoot). The economic recession is seen by Williams (1986) as increasing the influence and control of elected education officials in Canadian education:

> Whereas the traditional policy scenario in Canadian education saw the educational professional dominating the process, the recession saw this position changed; the elected provincial politicians now exert the dominant influence. These elected officials respond far more directly to the influence efforts of other constituencies such as the business community and the media rather than to professional educators and local boards of education. Consequently, the policy making process in most provinces . . . reflects strong political, as opposed to professional, dominance. (p. 36)

This perspective is endorsed by Zald (1969) who, in examining the power and functions of boards of directors, asserted that when strategic decisions are being made which will affect the future of the organization:

> board members have a responsibility to debate organizational matters. He proposes that in strategic decisions board power is most likely to be asserted. Applying the concept to school districts, Boyd [1975] holds that when strategic decisions are faced by a school board, both board and community power are likely to be mobilized. The handling of routine decisions, on the other hand, especially those based on technical and pedagogical questions, is likely to be left to the expertise of the administrative staff by the board and the community. (Pallozzi, 1981, p. 11)

In recounting the early experiences of school decline due to decreasing enrollments in the late 1970s, Eisenberger (1978) highlighted the importance of the way in which decisions are actually made by a school board. She warned that voting is not making decisions and true debate should surround the decision-making process--especially in regard to long term strategic planning:

> Coping with the often-agonizing issues of decline requires forceful, consistent decision making based on carefully constructed long-range plans. Implementing those long-range plans all but is impossible when decisions are apt to be reversed with every new election of the board. . . . In order to gain voluntary community compliance with strategic decisions, participation by the community in the process appears necessary. (p. 37)

However, there is an apparent difficulty for school jurisdictions in making and adhering to long-range plans, no doubt partly due to the constraints of annual budgets and the restrictions imposed on the use of reserve funds (Lortie, 1987; Mecca & Adams, 1991). It also seems ironic that those who make the downsizing decisions in a school jurisdiction are often the people with the shortest tenure--school boards and school superintendents (Lortie).

From a different perspective, Pashiardis and Baker (1992) claim that not only does school jurisdiction decision making belong mainly to the CEO, it is also his/her most important role (although Boich, Farquhar, and Leithwood (1989) propose that the school superintendent's responsibility for fiscal resources will require them to increase their symbolic leadership role in times of restraint; that is, they will need to market their systems to government, clients and the public in order to ensure their system receives a fair share of the resources). A study conducted by Pashiardis and Baker (1992) generally supported the notion expressed in the literature that:

> contextual facts play an important role in the way organizations attempt to tackle the issues they face. More specifically, the actions taken by superintendents tended to be more comprehensive when they perceived an opportunity; the contrary is true when faced with a threat. Their actions indicated they would primarily use their employees, as opposed to outside consultants, and that they would include as many employee experts as possible in key areas in the process of generating solutions. (p. 31).

In March's (1981) study of perceptions of educational decision making, the school jurisdiction CEO was reported to have the highest degree of control over administrative matters and the school board was perceived to have the highest degree of control over matters related to finance. The study also noted variations in patterns of control over decision making among teachers, principals, superintendents, school boards and provincial departments of education were apparent across jurisdictions of differing sizes.

Allison's (1989) somewhat later study of school district CEOs in Ontario showed a commitment on the CEO's part not only to implement properly constituted board directives, but a concomitant responsibility to help the board make good policy and "to try and head off decisions and actions, particularly by individual trustees, that they believed would unnecessarily endanger the operation and health of the system" (p. 298). Fullan, Park, Williams, Allison, and Watson (1987, p.78), who collected the original data which Allison reanalyzed for his study, report trustees as saying they wanted "good and complete information from the director, but even more they wanted advice, recommendations and direction. . . . One trustee suggested a further refinement, the director 'getting trustees to recognize the implications of their own ideas.' " Allison (1989) notes that such advice usually cannot be given publicly and much advice to guide decision making in school jurisdictions is given informally behind the scenes or in camera.

In a study conducted by Lichtenstein in 1989, he found that superintendents generally chose to provide boards with alternatives for the solution of a problem, along with a specific recommendation for the selection of one of those alternatives (p. 78). The same study by Lichtenstein

> revealed that when superintendents were asked to make decisions, they chose to involve insiders (central office administrators and teachers) almost equally in each of the problem areas [i.e. facilities, program, staffing]. However, outsiders (PTA, mayor, business community, community organizations, individuals in the community) were involved by superintendents to a much greater extent in the facility problem area than in either of the other two areas. . . . It can be argued that the resolution of problems related to program or staffing will more closely rely on decisions by insiders (educational professionals), while problems relating to facilities require the additional advice of outsiders. (p. 83)

Remembering that salaries comprise one of the largest expenditure items over which school jurisdictions have varying degrees of control (the larger the proportion of tenured teachers, the less discretionary power), it appears that decision making relating to downsizing could well be a shared process. Increased parent involvement in school board decisions is seen by Coleman and LaRocque (1990) to take on a new urgency for board members when the jurisdiction must respond to such politicized situations as a government restraint program.

According to Allison's (1989) previously cited study, the CEOs of large systems (that is, by his definition, jurisdictions with more than 10 000 enrollments) appear to manage the flow of information, issues and decisions in the organization through a variety of internal meetings: system administrators; ad hoc groups of colleagues; principals' meetings. He additionally identified these forums as the place where new problems are identified and assigned a place in the administrative work flow. Likewise, Leithwood and Musella's (1991) research on effective school districts suggests considerable involvement of school staffs and "experts" in system-level decision making. As well, involvement or participation of this sort is recommended and rationalized by LaRocque and Coleman's (1991) work on consensual norms for decision making in effective districts.

Genge and Holdaway (1992), in reporting on a study that examined how school superintendents identified as "effective" endeavored to improve the performance of their school systems, observed that such CEOs tended to ensure that extensive consultation occurred before decisions were made. The superintendents also interacted frequently with their board chairpersons and concurred with Allison's (1989) observations regarding recognition of the need for sound preparation between CEOs and chairpeople prior to board meetings.

For many school jurisdictions where the organizational memory or previous experiences do not contain any methodology for coping with retrenchment (such as that experienced by some school jurisdictions during the aforementioned period of enrollment/school decline), Ryzewic (1981) notes that they would initially lack the experience and decision rules for attempting to deal with downsizing. Such decision making is therefore likely to be a situation of forced choices as opposed to the spectrum of options most school jurisdictions in Alberta have experienced until recently.

Decision Making Relating to Downsizing

Downsizing, by its very nature, is often perceived to be a forced choice decision-making environment (Mortimer & Caruso, 1984), though McGlashan and Singleton (1987) suggest that while the choice parameters are reasonably specific, there is limited flexibility in the decision range and the decision variables can be quantified to assist in the process. Consequently, they propose such quantitative techniques as forecasting, simulation, probability and decision theory could aid the decision process and ensure the correct solution is chosen. This kind of advice assumes that decision makers can identify the "correct" problem (Mitroff & Featheringham, 1974). For example, in times of fiscal restraint, is the problem for school jurisdictions to downsize or to generate additional revenue? These difficulties of problem definition directly affect the options in the decision process with the result that virtually every decision-making theorist recommends the development of more than one option (Nutt, 1984, p. 447).

Another concern that permeates the downsizing literature is the recognition that the need to reduce personnel to meet financial constraints often overrides the sensitive management of the human dimensions (Hardy, 1990a) and creates serious productivity and morale problems within the remaining staff. Yet it is also widely recognized that it is the commitment of the continuing employees that determines the organization's ability to continue to perform its functions. In this respect it is important that the fragile morale usually engendered by the need to downsize not be further damaged by unsympathetic or insensitive decision making during the process on the part of management. To Mortimer and Caruso (1984), this implies the need for those involved in the process to focus their attention on the legitimacy and trustworthiness of the decision-making process as well as the criteria (that is, efficiency or equity) used to arrive at the judgments.

Decision making that involves the allocation of scarce resources must be made by every organization (Pfeffer, Salancik, & Leblebici, 1976) and is inherently a political process (Hardy, 1987; Hewton, 1986; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1974). The political dimension of downsizing is often highlighted by the numerous interest groups, both inside and outside of the organization, which request participation or forcibly intervene in the downsizing decision-making process. Whereas in a period of growth, money can often be used by administrators to control the level of conflict among interest groups in a school jurisdiction (Dembowski et al., 1979, p. 15), in times of restraint, money is the cause of conflict. Hardy (1990a) suggests it is therefore crucial, in the absence of money to perform that role, to accommodate stakeholders' needs in selecting downsizing strategies.

According to Whetten (1981), some understanding of decision making relating to downsizing can be provided by attribution theory. That is, because administrators in retrenching organizations would blame environmental events, over which they have little control, for their financial difficulties, they would see little need to evaluate critically institutionalized practices and belief systems. Whetten (1981) also suggests that stress has an impact on an administrator's ability to solve problems. He believes that administrators' perceptions that the penalty for making a wrong decision during a crisis is very severe oftentimes leads them to utilize a decision strategy that virtually eliminates the possibility of an innovative solution to the problem being selected:

> During an organizational crisis managers tend to constrict their communication network (both internally and externally), reduce the number of participants included in their decision-making process, enforce organizational rules and policies more closely, and reject information that disconfirms their definition of the problem. . . .Because their actions focus on combating stressful symptoms rather then solving underlying stress creating problems, they tend to avoid risky alternatives that are likely to create additional apprehension and frustration. Consequently, administrators are likely to favor an across the board cutback in existing services over a long-term reassessment of the organization's mission because it is politically less volatile and, therefore, more likely to quickly diffuse the emotionally charged atmosphere associated with retrenchment. (p. 84)

Hardy, as the most prolific author on cutbacks in education (1987, 1990a, 1990b, 1992), emphasizes in her writings (and one assumes her research) that the continued success of organizations undertaking downsizing activities depends upon their ability to balance economic and political pressures in their decision making, a skill Bacharach (1981) had previously claimed for school jurisdiction administrators in facing their daily dilemma of "trying to satisfy political and administrative imperatives simultaneously" (p. 4).

Decision Making Regarding Downsizing in School Jurisdictions

"Those who sweat in peace don't bleed as much in time of war" (Duignan & Ponder, 1978, p. 5) is Duignan and Ponder's dramatic advice to school administrators in approaching decision making relating to downsizing: "The suggestion is that [school boards] act *now* to develop policies that will help administrators avoid, or at least reduce, the staffing problems associated with [retrenchment]" (p. 5). So it was during the years of declining enrollments in the late 1970s-early 1980s that the educational literature on school decline repeatedly emphasized that educational administrators should not wait until a financial crisis was upon them before taking any action. Studies, such as those by Dembowski et al. (1979), though aimed at researching the impact of those specific times of enrollment decline, provide some background understanding of current downsizings in the educational context. The return of school principals, assistant principals, counselors, curriculum coordinators and a variety of educational administrators to classroom instruction, as well as retaining some supervisory and managerial responsibilities, is a pattern from that period that has recently been repeated in the contemporary downsizings of school systems in New Zealand and Australia.

The following sections of this review identify the main themes of the literature from that time, which while presented from the perspective of assessing retrenchment activities as a response to a dwindling student base, can be seen to have some significance in relation to the current downsizings--the main difference being that whereas finances at that time decreased in proportion to student numbers, the current situation generally reflects stable or increasing student numbers accompanied by diminishing financial resources, in some instances by large amounts/proportions.

Threat or Opportunity

Amidst the reports and advice on school decline, there is a literature that sees opportunities in decline. Zerchykov (1982) cites Culbertson as the most eloquent and persuasive spokesperson for this perspective. To Culbertson (1977), one of the major benefits of what is often seen by some as adversity, is the opportunity to address effectively problems in more than a piecemeal and time-bound fashion. Hardy (1990a) supports this positive viewpoint in her contention that downsizing can be considered an important investment in survival: "Contraction is the price paid for future viability and, as such, deserves the same creative analysis as any other investment decision; otherwise downgrading, not downsizing, will be the result" (p. 1). Alternatively, it is pointed out that staff contraction often limits advancement opportunities for both teachers and administrators and that the normal short-term jurisdictional budget-making processes all but preclude long-range planning and the making of creative choices. Zerchykov (1982) summarizes the opposing perspectives:

> 'Opinion' continues to be divided on the question of whether decline is an opportunity or a problem. The 'evidence' suggests that declining enrollments have not provided for any documented opportunities for creative, institutional renewal of American public schooling. Nor has decline precipitated any radical dismantling or deterioration of educational quality or opportunity, despite headline making retrenchment decisions such as school closings or reductions in force. (p. x)

Hewton (1986), in writing about cuts made to education in the United Kingdom in the early 1980s as a response to declining enrollments, developed a different, but allied, categorization of responses (to perceived threats/opportunities) for educational administrators of school systems; he identified defenders, reformers and pragmatists:

> The alternatives open to them all carry risks and penalties. One option is to 'fight the cuts' and resist all intrusions into their professional or political domain. These are the defenders. . . . A second option is to

> think forward and to think big. So education is under attack and many of its traditional values and procedures are being questioned--perhaps this is the time for radical change whilst the door is ajar! These are the reformers. . . . Finally there are the pragmatists, those who reluctantly make the best of a bad job. Feeling very unhappy, they make cuts but try to avoid a much damage as they can. People vacillate between the three positions. So do groups. (p. xii)

Despite a propensity for some administrators to make claims for financial constraint being a time for opportunity and/or reform, Whetten (1981) noted there was relatively little innovation stimulated by the need to economize in the period of school decline; rather, educational organizations were "basically doing less of the same" (p. 81).

Models/Typologies

Ryzewic (1981), after analyzing budgetary decision making at the school district level, concluded that of three different approaches to organizational change (which he identifies as organismic or structural theories, strategic decision-making theories, and routine decision-making theories), the decisions concerned with budgetary allocation (ergo downsizing) were most consistent with the theories of strategic decision making.

Cuban, in his introduction to Zerchykov's (1982) *Review of Literature and an Annotated Bibliography on Managing Decline in School Systems*, suggests that amongst the many important questions that remained unanswered about contracting school jurisdictions during the late 1970s and early 1980s was whether the decisions were "the product of rational, organizational bargaining or other modes of making choices?"(p. viii) Chaffee's (1982) analysis of the budgetary decision-making processes at Stanford University led her to conclude that in any resource allocation, the decision processes probably conform to more than one theoretical model and that the decision process and decision outcome may be independent, so that one could not be predicted by the other. However, she also suggests that:

> When controversial decisions affecting an institution's achievement of important goals must be made, tension can be lessened and polarity avoided if all parties involved in the decision understand the process of decision making and feel assured the process is rational. . . . Budgeting is a decision process in which matching a decision with institutional values and goals is a top priority. When that match is important, the rational model is more suitable then any other. (p. 3)

Whetten (1981) argued that educational administrators who were required to respond to financial constraint in the early 1980s viewed those declining resources within a closed-rational (as opposed to open-political) orientation; that is, they defined retrenchment as a problem requiring the passive solution of increased efficiency within the organization rather than looking to the wider environment and seeking "more innovative solutions involving a shift in the services provided or clients served" (p. 83).

In support of a "rational" approach is the evidence provided by Chabotar and Dentler (1985) on the activities of external consultants who were engaged during the years of school decline to undertake extensive data gathering and analysis as the bases of managing cutbacks. Recommendations made by the consultants were derived from enrollment projections, staffing profiles, reviews of facilities, and educational programs (that is, jurisdiction goals, curriculum and instruction, grade organization, personnel evaluation procedures, educational knowledge exchange and staff development arrangements), and jurisdiction-community relations and financial forecasts. In Chabotar and Dentler's (1985) words: "Our perspective was rationalistic, systematic, and formally empirical, and it was assumed that this was our mission" (p. 231). Duignan and Ponder (1978) nevertheless recognized that during the time of school decline "the choice of a most preferred alternative based on rational decision making . . . [gave way] to optimization, that is, the best solution given the circumstances" (p. 3).

Planning for decline should be participatory, according to Dembowski et al. (1979), involving all concerned parties and should use a shared decision-making format. Zerchykov (1982) agrees:

> The very process of participation [in decision making] can lead constituency groups to a clearer understanding of their own special interest and to a more forceful mobilization to protect that interest from the adverse effects of possible retrenchment decisions. . . . Evidence on the differential impact of retrenchment decision making on the school politics of different kinds of communities suggests that it is precisely those types of communities whose values and decision making styles are most congruent with (and reflective of) the rational, consensual policy making style advocated by the advice literature, that are likely to experience more intense political conflict as a result of retrenchment decisions. The evidence also indicates that this higher level of conflict disrupts and delegitimizes the very process of rational, consensual decision making presupposed by the craftlore on good management practice. (p. xiv)

Zerchykov (1982) also provides a number of references and quotes that indicate quite clearly some differences in perspectives from writers/researchers which suggest that administrators may be facing a trade-off when it comes to participation and involvement. He notes that school jurisdiction decision makers are left with the following kinds of advice from the literature:

> Share responsibility because whatever decisions you make will be controversial (Boyd, [1979], Stefonek [1979], and to a lesser extent, Dembowski [1979]) and they will further decrease your stock of leadership resources because any decision which hurts somebody calls into question your legitimacy, and because your decisions will not get implemented any way unless affected interests are involved (Berman & McLaughlin, [1978]). On the other hand, you have to say "no" (Culbertson, [1977]) and to say "no" you may have to centralize responsibility and authority (Mazzoni & Mueller, [1980]); and if you make the decision which offends the least number of people; you will (a) probably make cuts in the wrong areas, and (b) not satisfy everybody anyway (Stefonek, [1979]); and, finally, you have got to coordinate in cutback decision making and coordination problems are made more difficult the more decision makers there are (Minnesota, [1976]).
>
> Lurking behind this conflicting set of implicit advice are certain positions about participation: . . .
>
> (a) Good or bad, you can't avoid participation (Boyd, [1979]; Stefonek[1979])

> (b) You need participation because it defuses opposition and improves your chances of having your decisions implemented (Berman and McLaughlin, [1978], and to a lesser extent, Dembowski [1979])
>
> (c) You may not be able to avoid participation totally, but it does get in the way of coordinated, rational objective planning and decision making which is at a premium in retrenchment situations (Mazzoni and Mueller, [1980]; Minnesota [1976], and to a lesser extent, Cuban [1979])" (p. 20).

In an attempt to synthesize such "confusing" advice, Zerchykov (1982) simply recommends that a consensus based decision-making procedure should be adopted whereby, once a consensus decision has been reached, each participant in the decision-making process should explain why he or she approves. This clarifies each member's point of view and 'signals solidarity' as the board and the administration begin the work of selling the plan to school personnel and the community (p. 41). One irony of participatory planning revealed by Zerchykov (1982, p. 118) was the case study reported by Morgan and Wofford (1977) in which such a strategy ended up costing the jurisdiction more money as a conflict resolution device.

An exploratory analysis of retrenchment decision making during the years of school decline was conducted by Burlingame (1979), which, while it focused on school closure and consolidation controversies, could be considered as possibly indicative of RIF decisions. He describes a "proto-typical process of 'miasma'--a systematic inability to cut through deadlocks created by irreconcilable value positions and entrenched interests to gain support for technical-rational criteria which would transcend the deadlock. This deadlocking leads to ad-hoc decisions that satisfy no criteria" (Zerchykov, 1982, p. 120).

A number of other suggestions on retrenchment decision making for educationalists were compiled by Zerchykov (1982) as a compendium of advice, including:

- involve teachers in decisions and encourage collectively bargained agreements on RIF;
- develop inter-jurisdiction consortia for placing and sharing excess staff;
- establish and maintain a skills and qualifications inventory of all employees;
- make RIF policy decisions before you need to;
- cut all other expenses prior to RIF to show that all other avenues have been explored before staff were cut; and,
- criteria for displacement should not only include seniority based upon years of service in the jurisdiction, length of service in current assignment, number of years teaching in current area of certification, and total number of years teaching experience, but should also consider certification status, teaching assignments, educational preparation and training, teacher effectiveness (performance criteria), affirmative action programs, and any legislative requirements.

However, Johnson (1982), in her examination of the use of seniority in the school layoff and transfer practices during the years of school decline, acceded that performance-based practices are difficult to administer, and that district officials often eventually rely on seniority by default. Her study explored the possibility that seniority provisions that served both educational interests and were acceptable to teachers could be negotiated. Her conclusion was that a seniority scheme that preserves school quality and is acceptable to teachers can be designed--by having a seniority system that designates narrower layoff units (e.g., within specific subject areas) or includes constraints on transfers--that is, a process of "principled negotiations" (p. 30-31).

Impact on Staffing

Employee salaries constitute the major share of educational expenditures and are primary targets of any restraint measures. At the same time, any initiatives to reduce wages threaten job security or working conditions and are likely to be met by hostile industrial action (Wotherspoon, 1991, p. 29); action that is often strongly supported in part due to the recognition that for those who remain, retrenchment has a high propensity to intensify their workloads and the pace at which they perform their work (Dembowski et al., 1979).

In the literature on school decline, fewer pupils and surplus space precipitated the following impacts on staffing:

- There were persistent patterns of staff changes associated with decline: "Classroom teacher positions tend to decrease more rapidly than administrative/non-classroom professional positions; thus, increases occur in percentage of non-classroom personnel" (Zerchykov, 1982, p. xi).
- "Those districts with the greatest declines report median age increases in staff, whereas those increasing in enrollment report a decline in median age. Faculty age tends to increase as seniority determines layoffs" (Zerchykov, 1982, p. xi), but there was no evidence of an aging staff having any adverse impact.
- Seniority alone is often the guiding principle in reductions in force thereby often eroding affirmative action (especially in relation to desegregation) gains.

Criteria

Zerchykov (1982) also recognized that the lack of integration in the "advice" literature (usually published in the popular practitioner/professional journals) resulted in a number of contradictions between prescribed practices for responding to school decline and the practices as revealed in the more empirical literature. While the "advice" literature generally provided recipes for practitioners on how to minimize the impact of declining enrollments and empty buildings on laying off staff and worker alienation, the empirical side of the genre highlighted formulas for refining enrollment projections and determining whether decision making had been efficient or effective.

Whetten (1981) was one of the authors who differentiated between retrenchment strategies aimed at efficiency and those aimed at effectiveness while arguing that many educational administrators involved in the cutbacks of a decade ago often opted for strategies emphasizing efficiency believing in its curative powers to achieve effectiveness. The "hard" decisions, involving selected and targeted cuts, were advocated by many writers as being aimed at efficiency (for example, Dube and Brown, 1983; Heydinger, 1982; Mayhew, 1979; Mingle, 1981), whereas across-the-board type cuts often highlighted political expediency. Stefonek (1979) indicated that distributing the burdens of cutting back was a common practice: "Deadlocks and conflicts can often be avoided by allocating reductions across all programs and units, yet this may be far less productive and cause many more problems than if cuts were focused upon lowest priority areas of operations" (Zerchykov, 1982, p. 18).

A study by Berger (1982) of retrenchment policies and their organizational consequences in 59 school jurisdictions over a 10 year period considered retrenchment (with the emphasis on school closure) decision making from two perspectives. He identified these as:

- the closed rational model (which emphasized efficiency via selective cuts to ensure long-term survival); and,

- the open political model (emphasizing equity via across the board actions).

He concluded that policies emphasizing efficiency were more effective than policies emphasizing equity. Other findings included observations on the high percentage of superintendents who resigned their positions during the downsizing programs and the relatively greater effectiveness if an external successor to a departing superintendent was appointed to manage the downsizing than if successors were promoted from within.

In support of Berger's (1982) findings, Chabotar and Honan (1990) suggest that selective pruning is often preferred to across-the-board reductions in education because the latter are seen to be insensitive to "real" needs and inappropriately treat effective and efficient programs the same as ineffective and inefficient. Percentage cuts across-the-board may call for some minor economies in large unspecialized units but may totally incapacitate smaller units where the cut eliminates one or two key positions.

Hardy (1987) believes that this preference for "surgery rather than shaving" is an attempt to impose inappropriate business models on educational administration--inappropriate because educational organizations do not have the same range of economic options, they have to pay more attention to process ("decisions are influenced by political, collegial and garbage can processes as much as rational analysis" (p. 66)).

Conclusion

While there is considerable published and professional (and commercial) advice now available on ways to diminish the adverse effects of downsizing, most recognized scholars of the phenomenon suggest there is no better alternative than long term strategic human resources planning. However, the speed with which the economic problems will have an impact on the organization can vary considerably and many organizations do not have the long term plans in place. Organizations with cash reserves and alternative funding sources may have a lengthy planning/decision-making period in which to determine which strategies they will use in response to anticipated financial constraint; in other cases, the economic problems will be already present and highly constraining and they will need immediate response (Hardy, 1990a, p. 7).

The need to minimize dysfunctional worker responses to downsizing was a common theme in the "advice" literature, most writers recognizing that neglecting the human behavioral aspects of downsizing would most likely (and ironically) reduce organizational effectiveness through the very means intended to increase it (Greenhalgh, 1982).

In preparing his most comprehensive review on school decline (though restricted to the United States experience), Zerchykov (1982) and his team "learned that decision makers had no dearth of information about what to do; instead, there was a great deal of interest in how to secure community and political support for what has to be done, whether the 'what has to be done' is a matter of choice or necessity" (p. 6). His other main conclusion on educational administration during that period of school decline was that "the process of contraction cannot be accomplished simply by reversing the process of expansion" (p. 4). Zerchykov (1982) also concluded from his review that focused rather than across the board cuts are generally advised throughout the literature.

For school systems now confronted with decisions regarding downsizing, it is important such lessons from the past not be ignored. Chabotar and Honan (1990) propose a number of general principles gleaned from the literature on downsizing which, because of their summative nature, their relative currency and pertinence to contemporary school jurisdictions, seem an appropriate conclusion to the literature review:

- Strong organizations often need downsizing as much as declining organizations.
- Reconsideration of mission should precede determining strategies.
- Downsizing strategies should consider the possibility of future growth.
- Decreasing expenditure has a more predictable impact on financial condition than increasing revenues.
- Issues of quality should be as important as budgetary issues.
- Across the board reductions should be minimized.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the study (Figure 2.3), developed inferentially from the varied studies of Chaffee (1983) and Hardy (1987, 1990a, 1990b, 1992), highlights the literature's preoccupation with decision making regarding downsizing in relation to context, process, and content (by various labels), and serves to unify the research questions. In deriving the framework, information presented in the section on Decision Making in School Jurisdictions was used to identify variables for the *contextual* component; and information presented in the section on Downsizing Strategies was used as the basis of the *content* variables.

Ryzewic's (1981) contention that decisions concerned with budgetary allocation (ergo downsizing) are most consistent with the theories of strategic decision making is seemingly endorsed by a number of authors (including Ansoff, 1965; Bacharach et al., 1990; Barnett & Wilsted, 1988; Bess, 1988; Chaffee, 1983; Cope, 1981; Dill, 1964; Drucker, 1954; Hegarty & Hoffman, 1987). That endorsement is by way of their agreement that strategic decisions:

- are about matching an organization's activities to the environment and to its resource capability;
- demand some view of the future be taken; and,
- are likely to require an integrated approach to managing the organization.

On this basis, and in accord with Bryson's (1988) identification of the rational and the political models as being the most applicable in strategic decision making, the *process* component of the framework emphasizes this aspect of the decision-making literature.

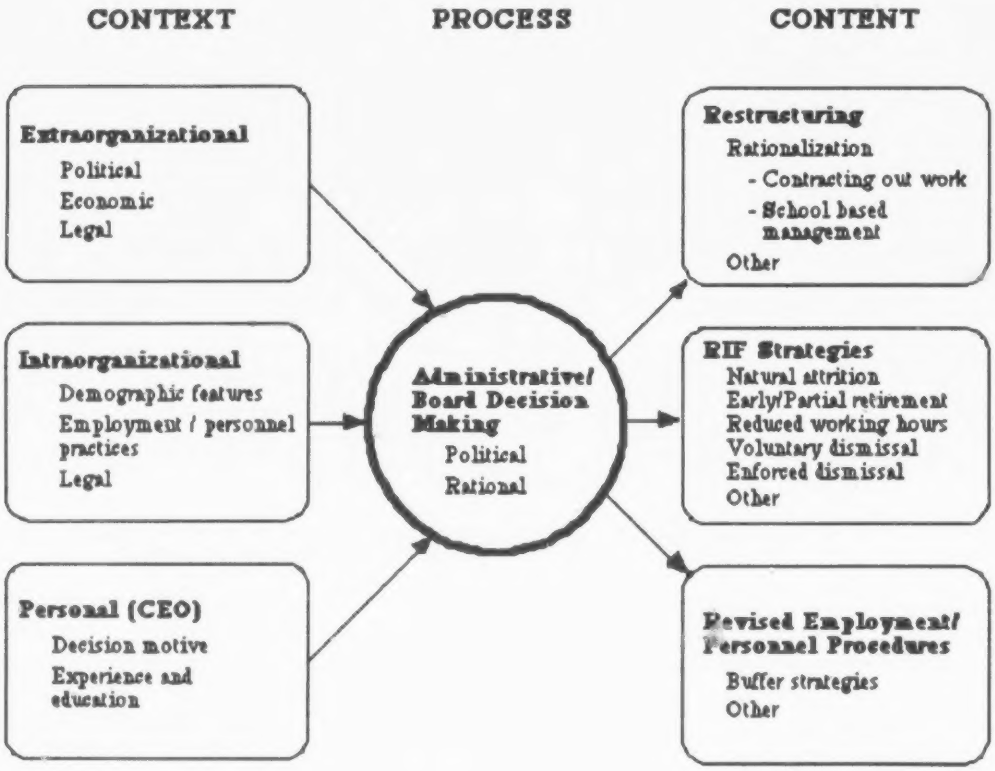
CONTEXT
PROCESS
CONTENT
Extraorganizational
Political
Economic
Legal
Intraorganizational
Demographic features
Employment / personnel practices
Legal
Personal (CEO)
Decision motive
Experience and education
Administrative/ Board Decision Making
Political
Rational
Restructuring
Rationalization
- Contracting out work
- School based management
Other
RIF Strategies
Natural attrition
Early/Partial retirement
Reduced working hours
Voluntary dismissal
Enforced dismissal
Other
Revised Employment/ Personnel Procedures
Buffer strategies
Other

Figure 2.3

Conceptual Framework: A contextual/processual/content model describing decision making regarding downsizing in school jurisdictions.

The preceding diagram is thus intended to illustrate the potential for matching the decision-making process to context, and for content (that is, downsizing strategies) to be correlated with either context or process, or both. Hardy (1987, 1990b) suggests that application of a context/process/content model could show that the same downsizing strategies may be used, but that different decision-making processes which are consistent with particular contexts may also be used to get there.

The framework complies with Estler's (1988) contention that such representations should provide useful implications for practice when they are conditional to specific circumstances, such as fiscal restraint. Its usefulness for describing downsizing decision-making activities in school jurisdictions was addressed by the research project involving school jurisdictions in Alberta as described in this thesis.

The methodology for pursuing the aims of the study as specified in Chapter 1 within the conceptual framework outlined above is presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter, which outlines the methodology of the study, includes details on its design and a description of the specific techniques used to collect and analyze the data. A summary of the basic characteristics of the respondents concludes the chapter.

Design of the Study

The study can best be described as a descriptive/analytic exploration of the downsizing decision-making processes used by school system administrators in responding to financial constraint within their own jurisdictions. In recognizing that the study focused on an issue about which there was very little information in respect of the status quo (Greenhalgh, 1982; Harrington-Lueker, 1992; Rodriguez, 1992; Weikart, 1984; Zerchykov, 1982), it was decided to use a survey as the major method of collecting data, aimed at discovering the extent and nature of downsizing decision-making activity that was actually occurring in school jurisdictions. Surveys are identified by Borg and Gall (1989), Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (1990) and Sprinthall, Schmutte and Sirois (1991) as particularly suitable for describing an existing state of affairs for a particular population, and further accredited by Kerlinger (1973) as appropriate "to discover significant variables in the field situation, to discover relations among variables, and to lay the groundwork for later, more systematic and rigorous testing of hypotheses" (p. 406). In the words of Ary et al. (1990):

> Descriptive research studies are designed to obtain information concerning the current status of phenomena. . . .The aim is to describe 'what exists' with respect to variables or conditions in a situation. . . . In other words, the administrator is not testing a hypothesis but is seeking information to assist in decision making. . . . [It] asks questions about

> the nature, incidence, or distribution of educational variables and/or the relationships among these variables. (p. 381)

The exploratory aspect of the study was mainly concerned with identifying patterns of relationships between two or more variables. Ary et al. (1990) note that information gained from such exploratory correlations are especially useful for trying to understand a complex construct or building a theory about some behavioral phenomena. They additionally advise that the variables selected for study should be based on previous research and the researcher's observation--advice incorporated into the conceptual framework of this study. Three main types of variables (contextual, processual and content) were defined on the basis of previous research identified in the literature review to facilitate correlational analysis, which, according to Isaac and Michael (1971) and to Gay (1987), "attempts to determine whether, and to what degree, a relationship exists between two or more quantifiable variables . . . [it] never establishes a cause-effect relationship, only a relationship" (p. 11-12).

In addition to discovering general insights into the downsizing decision-making process via the exploratory survey, interviews with a small number of selected survey participants and their nominees were used to complement the survey data and to assist the researcher in going beyond the description of the downsizing decision-making activity to identify similarities or differences between school jurisdictions and their downsizing decision-making activities, and to identify trends and offer possible explanations for such findings. It is proposed by Miklos (1992) that such description/analysis provides understanding of educational administrative behavior.

The description and analysis were based not only upon the consolidation and interpretation of data from a survey questionnaire and post-questionnaire interviews, but also from statistical data gleaned from annual reports and other relevant documents submitted by school jurisdictions to Alberta Education.

In acknowledgment of the topical nature of the study, a media clippings file was maintained throughout the data collection period. While not included in the data analyses, this activity was considered necessary because of the dynamics surrounding many of the issues being researched; television transcripts as well as newspaper and journal articles were used to obtain perspectives held by both the educational and the wider community in relation to the management of financial constraint by the provincial government and various school jurisdictions.

Overall, the study design focused on gaining an understanding of the ways in which school systems approach the practical problem of making decisions regarding downsizing and a concern with providing practical guidelines as possible solutions to that problem. The study of downsizing also represents the choice of a specific example of administrative behavior as a means of examining the broader issue of strategic decision making. This approach is consistent with the postpositivistic notion that general principles which are true evolve from such a study (Palys, 1992), and can lead to an understanding of decision making regarding downsizing in terms of the organizational functions it performs (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

The study inherently reflected the researcher's preference for learning from others' experience, not necessarily with an aim to duplicating successful *modus operandi* but with a definite view of building on available information for understanding and application (modified or otherwise) in similar scenarios, ever mindful that "how people use the theory to guide practice is not a question of science but of politics" (Popkewitz, 1984, cited in Greene, 1990, p. 233).

The survey questionnaire was administered Alberta-wide, with the intent of providing information which could be generalized to school jurisdictions nationally and possibly to comparative education systems globally. Although generalizability could be seen to be a problem for a study examining decision making regarding downsizing in a single province, the focus on Alberta did allow the elimination of factors that could have weakened the internal validity of the study had it included school jurisdictions from other provinces. Because the study investigated school jurisdictions in only one province, the legislation governing school jurisdictions and their financial administration was uniform, and variables that explained differences in the choice of downsizing strategies could be identified more precisely. The data yielded from the interviews were intended to enrich the general perspective of the downsizing activity gained from the survey with specific experiences possibly offering potential for transferability to individual situations.

Methodology

The methodology of this study was significantly influenced by the review of literature relating to downsizing and decision making and was further informed (though to a lesser degree) by the literature about school decline, organizational change and the restructuring of organizations. Not only was this study, therefore, somewhat eclectic in its conceptual sources, but also in its use of a variety of research methods in an attempt to ameliorate the problems identified by Chaffee (1982) in her study of educational budgetary decision making. For Chaffee, "the two major problems in studying organizational decision processes are (1) participants are not a good source of data and (2) the target is a moving one--a process that unfolds over time and is composed of diverse elements" (p. 6).

Data Collection

Data collection for the study involved three main stages:

a) mail-out questionnaires to all school jurisdiction CEOs in Alberta which sought details of their system's decision making regarding downsizing;

b) follow-up interviews with personnel from two of the respondent school jurisdictions which indicated a willingness to participate in a more detailed exploration of their downsizing activities; and,

c) statistical data compiled by Alberta Education on the basis of operational reports and/or annual reports submitted to Alberta Education by school jurisdictions.

Triangulation of the data so gained was used to increase the depth of understanding the study could yield (Berg, 1989) concomitant with contributing to the trustworthiness of the data (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992) and addressing Chaffee's (1982) aforementioned concerns.

Questionnaire

The survey approach via mail-out questionnaires appeared to be the most efficient method available for collecting original data for the purpose of describing a population too large to observe directly (Coleman, 1978). As the prime source of data it also provided current information not available from other sources (Gay, 1987). The population for the study was the CEOs of all active school jurisdictions in the province. Such "saturation" (Coleman, 1978, p. 78), or census surveying, is feasible because the total number of school jurisdictions was small--only 147 at the time of the survey.

The purpose of the questionnaire was:

- to collect detailed factual information that described existing contextual and processual features;
- to facilitate comparisons and evaluations; and,
- to determine what others were doing with similar problems/situations and benefit from their experience in making future plans and decisions (Isaac & Michael, 1971).

Several writers on research outline the steps and procedures for composing and conducting questionnaire surveys (Borg & Gall, 1989; Fowler, 1993; Gay, 1987; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Isaac & Michael, 1971; Palys, 1992) which were used as guidelines by this researcher. Prior to the preparation of the questionnaire, additional assistance in composing the instrument was afforded by the researcher's participation in a conference/workshop on *Leadership in a Fiscal Crisis* conducted by the Alberta School Boards Association in May 1993. Attended by board members and superintendents from school jurisdictions throughout the province, the conference program served to highlight the predominant prevailing administrative issues for school jurisdictions facing decisions regarding downsizing as a result of government financial constraint. Combined with informal consultations with a number of the researcher's "agreeable peers" (as suggested by Glesne and Peshkin (1992)) such as superintendents and assistant/associate superintendents undertaking graduate studies with the researcher, the conference/workshop was used to ameliorate the researcher's lack of familiarity with the Alberta educational context in selecting terminology and structuring items for the draft questionnaire (Marshall & Duignan, 1987). Conversations between the researcher and conference participants assisted in the transformation of the researcher's prior personal experience of the downsizing process and knowledge gained from the literature on downsizing and decision making into survey questions anchored in the cultural reality of the intended respondents. The conversations were also used to seek advice on access to the intended population for the survey and the protocol for such access (as per Sieber's (1978) contention that such exploratory exercises that precede surveys yield valuable information about the receptivity, frames of reference and span of attention of intended questionnaire respondents). The conference also acted as a precursor to the post-questionnaire interviews (Guba, 1990) by giving the researcher some idea of the interest (or otherwise) school jurisdiction CEOs had in talking about their personal responses and/or reactions to financial constraint.

The Director of School Business Administration Services, Alberta Education, was also consulted regarding his impressions of downsizing activity that was taking place in Alberta school jurisdictions. His assistance was also sought in determining what demographic data pertinent to the study would be readily available from within his organization and could therefore be omitted from the questionnaire and /or used for triangulation of data purposes.

Based on the review of literature and the aforementioned preliminary activities, a draft questionnaire was developed. While the majority of items on the questionnaire required forced-choice responses, there were also sections designed to obtain statistical/demographic information, to elicit open-ended responses about undefined variables, and to glean additional ideas and explanations that respondents viewed as important in downsizing activities. The wording of questions and verbal anchors on frequency scales were specifically chosen in an attempt to limit bias on the part of the researcher and in the responses. Isaac and Michael (1971) and Ary et al. (1990) also highlight the benefit and propensity of Likert-type or summated rating scales used for some of the questions in allowing participants to respond with a degree of intensity.

The draft questionnaire instrument was reviewed by a small number of university faculty members recognized for their expertise in such a medium and by the researcher's advisory committee to ensure the items were both indicative of and comprehensive in assessing decision making relating to downsizing in school jurisdictions. The questionnaire requested school jurisdiction administrators to indicate:

- if they were involved in downsizing;

- the duration (anticipated or concluded) of the downsizing program;
- the goals of the downsizing policy/program (including financial and/or RIF headcount);
- which specific strategies (such as natural attrition, early retirement, partial retirement, job sharing, voluntary severance, enforced dismissal, and/or restructuring) were being used;
- what criteria were used to determine strategies;
- impact (actual/anticipated) of those strategies on personnel;
- how downsizing decisions were made (including who participated);
- decision motive; and,
- what effect the downsizing activity had on determining future employment policies/practices and/or organizational structure.

These nine foci served both to organize the data collection and to provide some initial guidance in the later analysis.

The questionnaire was designed with the intent of being direct, unambiguous and as aesthetically appealing as possible so as to capture attention and interest of potential respondents. As an additional motivation to respond to the survey, participants in the actual study were assured of receiving a summary of the research results (if desired) on its completion. A copy of the questionnaire is attached as Appendix A.

Because the information on decision making relating to downsizing may have been considered by respondents to be getting at controversial or personal information, questionnaires were treated anonymously. However, they were coded to facilitate follow-up interviews and to enable responses to be matched with demographic and budgetary data from Alberta Education.

School superintendents were selected as the respondent group on the assumption that officers at that level were most likely to have an overview of the decision-making processes in their jurisdiction. Furthermore, as CEOs, they were responsible for the financial status of their jurisdiction, and from their knowledge of the forces at work, could estimate the degree and type of impact financial constraint was having on individuals and the organization.

At the time of the survey, 142 active public and separate school jurisdictions in Alberta were identified from information provided by Alberta Education to be in existence and therefore potential recipients of the survey. However, it was noted that some individuals served as CEO of more than one jurisdiction, and in order to alleviate the problems which might occur if a CEO received a number of identical requests for participation, such "multiple-jurisdiction" CEOs were given the option of receiving a single questionnaire if in fact their multiple jurisdictions were either officially or *de facto* collectively administrated or that the responses to financial constraint in their various jurisdictions had been uniform. This resulted in 121 individual CEOs being identified to receive 139 questionnaires.

Pilot study. The reliability of the questionnaire was initially assessed by testing it on a number of Department of Educational Administration doctoral students. The subsequently revised questionnaire was then sent to a small sample (four school superintendents) from the intended population (as proposed by Gay, (1987)). These pretest subjects were encouraged to make comments and suggestions concerning directions, recording procedures and specific items (as per Appendix B). Few revisions were made to the pretest questionnaire, permitting most of the data gained in the pilot exercise to be admitted in the final data analysis.

Isaac and Michael (1971) and Ary et al. (1990) are but two of the sources which emphasize the importance of a pilot study in increasing the chances of obtaining clear cut findings in the main study and in providing the opportunity for providing "enough data for the research worker to make a sound decision on the advisability of going ahead with the main study" (p. 5).

Distribution and return of questionnaire. The first mailing of questionnaires took place in June 1993. A few days after the deadline established for the return of questionnaires in the letter of transmittal (Appendix C), a reminder postcard (Appendix D) was sent to all original addressees. A follow-up letter (Appendix E) was sent approximately three weeks later to non respondents. Full scale follow-up involved telephone calls and, in some cases, new letters and copies of the questionnaire.

Responses to the survey included indications from three multiple-jurisdiction CEOs that they had belatedly chosen to exercise their option not to respond individually for each of their jurisdictions. This reduced the number of potential respondents to 135. Other responses included an indication from three jurisdictions that they had closed or amalgamated (or were in the process of doing so), and that another three, because of changes to administration, were unable to knowledgeably answer the questionnaire items, and had consequently disqualified themselves as potential respondents. Five CEOs indicated an inability to participate due to lack of time to complete the survey instrument, leaving only four jurisdictions choosing not to participate for unexplained reasons. In total, 120 usable responses were received from the originally identified 139 recipient jurisdictions, which from an adjusted potential response of 129 yielded a 93% response rate (or 86% of the original 139). Such a high percentage of responses and the extensive length of some comments proffered as answers to the open-ended questions have been interpreted by other researchers to indicate the high concern the respondents had regarding the topic being investigated (Musella, 1991).

Endorsement by the executive of the College of Alberta School Superintendents must also be acknowledged as a significant factor in the high response rate to the survey. Preliminary details of the study and encouragement to participate were circulated to the College's membership in a newsletter approximately one week prior to the first mailing of questionnaires.

Not only was there a high numerical response rate to the questionnaire (109 returns were received within three weeks of the first mailing), 20 respondents forwarded copies of their formal redeployment/redundancy policies and 58 also provided the name/s and position/s of people in their jurisdiction who could be contacted for interview. The letters and unsolicited comments accompanying some of the returned questionnaires indicated in many instances a great deal of research had gone into the responses and that the respondents perceived the creation of a baseline of data on decision making regarding downsizing to be a worthwhile endeavor.

While the goal in any study based on questionnaires is 100% return, Ary et al. (1990) note that a more reasonable expectation may be 75-90% return. According to Isaac and Michael (1971) and Gay (1987) non responses under 20% can reasonably be ignored. Being a population survey, as opposed to a sample survey, it was considered that the 7% non-return rate did not warrant interviews with a sample of the non-respondents. Nevertheless, telephone contact was made with all non-respondent jurisdictions to ensure there were no distinctive traits that would bias any results of the study (Fowler, 1993). A more detailed profile of respondent jurisdictions is provided on pages 80-83.

Post-Survey Interviews

Sieber (1978) and Borg and Gall (1989) propose that qualitative fieldwork is useful for the interpretation of statistical relationships. On that basis, a small number of post-survey interviews were conducted to expand upon, clarify and enrich the data collected from the questionnaires (Isaac & Michael, 1971; Palys, 1992) as well as to provide a means of checking and assuring the effectiveness of the survey. Replies to the survey questions were used to suggest leads for the interviews and eliminate the need to ask routine "background" questions in this second phase of the study. Sieber (1978, p. 375) suggests such use of questionnaire responses increases their value by affording greater realism, enhancing rapport and offering guidelines for specific interview probes.

The interviews also enabled the human relations aspect of downsizing to be explored in some depth, not only with some of those involved, but also with some of the people responsible for the process itself and in some cases for the regeneration of the organization after the downsizing program is completed. Interviews were limited in number (ten people in total from two jurisdictions) in recognition of this secondary, and strictly enhancing role, although it was recognized their inclusion in the study helped alleviate the possibility that the data gathered via the questionnaire, in being statistically aggregated, lost some of its meaning and therefore did not fit reality (Berg, 1989). Additionally, Palys (1992) suggests the interview as a medium for picking up on many of the disadvantages of questionnaires. While the claim for the follow-up interviews was the intention to add to knowledge about selected downsizing decision-making issues, there can be no assurance about the representativeness of the perceptions yielded through that process.

The semi-structured, open-ended interview schedule, as well as being derived from analysis of the questionnaire data, also incorporated downsizing decision-making issues from the researcher's experience, the literature, and the discussions with colleagues which were not included in the mail-out questionnaire because of their assessment as being more suitable for exploration in the interview situation. The basic interview schedule (Appendix F) was modified and shortened after it was pretested with a respondent whose jurisdiction met the interview selection criteria but was not selected for participation in that phase of the study.

Interviews were conducted with a purposive sample from respondent jurisdictions which had indicated they were reducing staff numbers, were in receipt of reduced government funding, had developed or recently reviewed a formal redeployment/redundancy policy, and were willing to involve a variety of participants in the process. Employing a "snowball approach", CEOs nominated principals, board members, union representatives, senior administrators, secretary-treasurers, and themselves as good informants who would be willing to be interviewed about downsizing issues in school jurisdictions.

Interviews were conducted in person and by telephone as situations permitted. The role taken and expressed by the interviewer was that of educational colleague with recent personal administrative experience in downsizing wishing to share those experiences with others in similar situations. While the interviews were guided by the prepared interview schedule, interviewees were encouraged to explore the issues freely and elaborate upon their particular concerns related to any area associated with current or impending fiscal constraint in education in Alberta. Interview data were tape recorded for objectivity and efficiency (Gay, 1987), and analysis was by way of seeking patterns (viz. similarities and dissimilarities) in the transcriptions of the tapes for sorting into the major topics/themes and sub themes of the study.

While the entire population of the study was surveyed via the questionnaire, there was no intention that the findings from the qualitative aspects of the study (that is, the limited number of post-questionnaire interviews) would be generalizable. They may have some transferability depending on the reader of the study's ability to apply results to her/his own situation.

Data Analysis

As indicated previously, the nature of this study was a descriptive/analytic exploration of the downsizing decision-making processes used by school system administrators in responding to financial constraint within their own jurisdictions. Therefore, data were collected on two administrative processes--decision making and downsizing--in addition to data describing organizational variables. The unit of analysis was identified as the school jurisdiction and statistical data analysis consequently was based on that unit.

Statistical data collected in the study were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. In particular, percentage frequency distributions, mean ratings and other descriptive statistics were used to present the distribution of downsizing activity. Factor analysis was employed to identify differences in the decision-making processes. Cross tabulations and multiple regression analysis also provided information identifying correlations between contextual and processual variables and was used to confirm and reject differences in use of various downsizing strategies reviewed in the literature.

Palys (1992) notes that quantification is not explanatory in itself, indicating the need for descriptive/analytic commentary and content analysis of responses to the open-ended questions. Responses relating to such issues as changes in personnel/employment policies were used as a basis for gaining supplementary data through the post-questionnaire interviews.

In terms of the data gleaned from the post survey interviews, content analysis was performed. Responses from this portion of the study sorted into topics which the researcher was able to relate and correlate with those of the questionnaire. The transcript analysis sought to identify commonalities, contrasts and conceptual themes in the way interviewees discussed their experiences of downsizing with the descriptions of responses to financial constraint provided by CEOs in their responses to the questionnaire. The resulting synthesis identified several emergent themes which are presented using mainly verbatim interview comments in the following chapters.

Validity and Reliability

The trustworthiness of the data was strengthened by using multiple data collection methods (that is, triangulation). Budgetary information obtained from Alberta Education was used to corroborate financial data provided by questionnaire respondents. Cross checking details in post survey interviews was also used for corroboration/disconfirmation of questionnaire responses and data contained in policy documents submitted by questionnaire respondents.

Internal consistency and reliability were checked by building some redundancy into the questionnaire and the interview schedule. That is, items on the same topic were rephrased and repeated in the questionnaire and the interviews as suggested by Ary et al. (1990, p. 434). Overall plausibility or credibility of a respondent's account of decision-making regarding downsizing was assessed also by looking for internal consistency in the decision-making techniques reported in the questionnaire. In addition, responses and comments made in reference to one question were examined in the light of responses made in reference to other questions to see whether or not they made sense, given all the information available about the jurisdiction (Coleman & LaRocque, 1990).

According to Ary et al. (1990) and Fowler (1993), the validity of a questionnaire is influenced by how important the topic is to the respondent, how informed the respondent is about the topic, and whether the questionnaire protects the respondent's anonymity, especially when sensitive or personal questions are asked. The previously mentioned high response rate, combined with the apparent willingness of respondents to forward other documentation (such as redundancy policies and downsizing goal statements) and a number of unsolicited comments, was taken to indicate a widespread acceptance of the study's value and contributed to the validity aspect.

A validation check on information obtained via interview was performed by interviewees examining summaries made from transcripts of their interviews to indicate their accuracy (as per Appendix G). Clarification and elaboration of the responses within the interviews were sought while the interview was in process and summarized to the respondent's satisfaction at the end of each session.

The complementary methods used in this study (questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, document analysis) form part of the validation process in terms of convergent validity (Rossi, Wright, & Anderson, 1983).

Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted in conformity with the ethical guidelines of the University of Alberta General Faculties Council and the Department of Educational Administration. Particular attention was given to consent, confidentiality and anonymity of respondents.

Although respondents to the survey and interviewees were not asked for written consent, they were given sufficient information about the study that their return of the questionnaire or willingness to be interviewed was interpreted as consent to participate (Smith, 1990). Participants were not misled about purposes or procedures, nor denied any information in connection with the study; they were advised that participation was voluntary and that they could personally withdraw or withdraw information at any time; they were asked to approve the accuracy of interview summaries and were able to prohibit the use of any quotation. Codes used to identify data sources in order to facilitate follow-up procedures have not, nor will be, revealed by the researcher to anyone else. Data have either been aggregated or compiled across respondent groupings for reporting purposes, or simply attributed to an anonymous respondent unidentifiable by the context in which the data are presented.

A copy of the final study and/ or a summary of results is available to any interested participant. All respondents were advised to contact the supervisor of the researcher in the event of any concerns or complaints.

Profile of Respondents

According to Alberta Education (1993b, p. 31) at the time of the study, the province had 147 school boards, of which 142 were operating boards and five were non-operating (that is, they did not operate schools but sent students to nearby jurisdictions). The following graph produced by Alberta Education (1993b. p. 32) presents a more detailed description of school jurisdictions in the province by size.

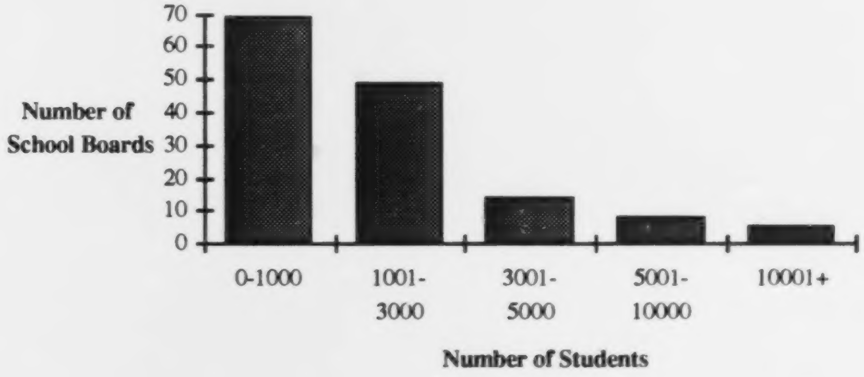

Figure 3.1

School Jurisdiction Size in Alberta, 1993

Of the 139 school jurisdictions in the province identified for the purposes of the study (which counted multi-jurisdictions administered cooperatively by one CEO as single jurisdictions and also included several jurisdictions which have since amalgamated or otherwise ceased to exist), sizes varied in range from 69 to 98 204 student enrollments. Such a large range obviously reflected variations in administrative structure and size. The mean jurisdiction size was 3 658 students, but the distribution was skewed, over half of the jurisdictions having fewer than 1 300 students. This endorses the generally held perception that quite small school jurisdictions continue to predominate in Alberta, in spite of repeated appeals for consolidation and continuing claims from various sources about their inefficiencies and ineffectiveness.

After examination of the above figures and reference to several recent Canadian educational studies which variously defined school jurisdiction sizes as ranging from small to very large (Allison, 1989; Coleman and LaRocque, 1990;

Table 3.1

Profile of Responses as per Size of Jurisdiction
(n = 139)

Jurisdiction Size		Number of Jurisdictions	Number of Respondents	Number of Respondents Downsizing
Category	Size			
Small	Students < 3000	109	93	51
Medium	3000 ≤ students ≤12000	25	24	18
Large	Students > 12000	5	3	2
Total		139	120	71

Montgomerie, Peters, & Ward, 1991), it was decided to adopt the definitions used by Montgomerie et al. (p. 39), mainly in the interests of local consistency and meaningfulness, for profiling and analyzing the results of this study.

As could be expected, four of the large jurisdictions in the province are the public and separate boards in Edmonton and Calgary, the medium jurisdictions are primarily public districts in cities or counties surrounding the larger cities, while the small jurisdictions are primarily rural. On the average, school jurisdictions classified as small had budgets of $7 309 548, employed 71 teachers/certificated staff, and provided educational services for an enrollment of 1 148. Medium jurisdictions, on the average, had budgets of $30 741 185, employed 298 teachers/certificated staff, and provided educational services for an enrollment of 5 192. The large jurisdictions, on the average, had budgets of $270 336 917, employed 2 923 teachers/certificated staff, and provided educational services for an enrollment of 50 698.

Comparison of more detailed enrollment, 1993-94 budget, staffing, 1992-93 expenditure per student, and 1992-93 and 1993-94 grant figures (all obtained from a customized computer report generated by Alberta Education's School Finance and Facilities Branch on September 15, 1993 and demographic data obtained from the Information Services Branch dated "09/'93") also revealed that:

- whereas small respondent jurisdictions were typical of small jurisdictions overall, those which identified themselves as downsizing generally had higher enrollments[1], higher budgets, more staff, much higher grants (especially in 1992-93 compared to 1993-94.)

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[1] Enrollment figures reflect ECS-12 as at 09/1992. Later enrollment figures were not available at the time of the study, although resident student numbers were. The decision to use enrollment numbers was made on the basis of advice that yearly expenditure figures (from which per student amounts were calculated) included such items as transfers from other jurisdictions to cover non-resident pupils.

- medium sized jurisdictions which identified themselves as downsizing were typical of medium jurisdictions which responded and also the population of medium sized jurisdictions overall; and,
- respondent large jurisdictions were not representative of that category overall. In light of the very small number involved (five jurisdictions, of which three responded and two identified themselves as downsizing), that category was not pursued separately in seeking correlational data.

Table 3.2

Comparison of Respondent Jurisdictions

Category	Average Enrollment	Average Budget $1 000s	Average Number of Certificated Staff	Average Expenditure per Student 1992-93 $	Average Grant 1992-93 $1 000s	Average Grant 1993-4 $1 000s
Small	1 148	7 310	71	6 212	4 278	4 421
Small Respondent	1 186	7 605	73	6 228	4 378	4 517
Small Downsizing	1 421	9 183	88	6 176	5 287	5 365
Medium	5 192	30 741	298	5 809	17 858	18 533
Medium Respondent	5 207	30 902	299	5 824	17 920	18 595
Medium Downsizing	5 341	31 763	307	5 876	18 468	19 167
Large	50 698	270 337	2 923	5 407	148 120	150 017
Large Respondent	25 515	139 806	1 442	5 493	74 966	74 403
Large Downsizing	22 098	122 337	1 294	5 672	65 294	67 752

Note: Original data obtained from Alberta Education computer generated reports on operating revenues and expenditures as of September 15, 1993; enrollment and demographic data obtained from Alberta Education Information Services Branch September, 1993; enrollment data (ECS-12) as at September 1992.

The preceding table, compiled from analysis of figures provided by Alberta Education, compares the features of the responding downsizing jurisdictions with those of all the jurisdictions surveyed.

Further details on the financial resources and responsibilities of the school jurisdictions will be provided in the next chapter as the contextual basis for reporting the results of the data analysis.

Chapter 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Prior to reporting the results of the survey and the post-survey interviews, the administrative setting of the study is described in some detail as an introduction to this chapter and to provide a focused context for the data analysis. Results of the analyses of the responses to the individual questions on the survey, the interviews, and financial/demographic data from Alberta Education follow, juxtaposed as logically complementary elements in describing the decision-making processes and downsizing strategies used by school jurisdictions in Alberta in responding to financial constraint.

The Administrative and Financial Context

Alberta Education, in a recent publication titled *Meeting the Challenge: An Education Roundtable Workbook* (1993b) (which was published to guide public discussion on the proposed 20% cuts of $369 million to the provincial education budget between 1994-95 and 1996-97), succinctly reminded individual school jurisdictions of their administrative responsibilities:

> Each school jurisdiction has its own administration, develops its own policies consistent with broad guidelines established by the province and the School Act, develops its own budget, levies taxes, hires teachers and other staff, and provides educational services to students. . . . School boards are given provincial grants provided policies are in place to ensure that the funds are expended are [sic] achieving the intended results. School boards have considerable local independence in meeting student needs (p. 32).

Such responsibilities were identified to be carried out by the locally elected school boards and their appointed Superintendents/CEOs.

As a precursor to understanding the results of this study on Alberta school jurisdictions' responses to financial constraint, the funding of education in the province at the time of the study is clarified further in the next few paragraphs in an attempt to establish a baseline perspective from which the various jurisdictions' decision-making activity regarding downsizing can be presented. Alberta Education (1993a) described the funding of education in the province as:

> a cooperative and joint undertaking of locally elected school boards and the provincial government. School boards are responsible for a portion of education costs through taxation on both residential and non-residential property, while the province provides a major portion of funds from general revenues and a tax levy on non-residential property. (p. 2)

In 1993-94 revenues generated from local property taxes represented approximately 37% of the total funding for education. Of the portion funded by the provincial government, 75% was distributed to schools through the School Foundation Program Fund (SFPF), moneys for which came from the general revenues of the province and a tax levy on non-residential (commercial and industrial) property. The SFPF provided support for three foundation programs:

- basic instruction per student grants;
- student transportation grants; and,
- school capital debt retirement.

The remaining 25% of provincial funds was distributed through the School Grants Regulations using funds from the general revenues of the province. The School Grants Regulations were composed of Equity Grants (to compensate for lack of educational opportunities--such as distance learning), Special Program Grants (to meet special needs of students beyond basic education--such as language instruction), Special Education Grants (to support programs for exceptional children with special needs--such as the gifted or disabled), General Education Grants (to allow jurisdictions to direct funds into classroom programs which were priorities in their areas), Early Childhood Services, and Private School Assistance.

The following table, compiled from figures presented in Alberta Education's information leaflets *Finance Brochure 1992-93* and *Finance Brochure 1993-94*, details the province's school jurisdiction revenues for both school years:

Table 4.1

Alberta School Jurisdiction Revenues

Revenue Source	1992-93		1993-94	
Provincial General Revenue	$1.44 B	50.3%	$1.48 B	50.3%
Provincial SFPF Levy	$0.21 B	7.3%	$0.21 B	7.2%
Total Provincial Share	$1.65 B	57.6%	$1.69 B	57.5%
Local Property Taxes	$1.06 B	37.1%	$1.10 B	37.4%
Other Local Revenue	$0.15 B	5.3%	$0.15 B	5.1%
Total Local Share	$1.21 B	42.4%	$1.25 B	42.5%
Total School Jurisdiction Revenue	$2.86 B	100%	$2.94 B	100%

Note: "B" denotes billions of dollars

Translation of those figures into the composition of jurisdictions' budgets is illustrated in Figure 4.1. Provincial money granted to school jurisdictions for the 1993-94 fiscal year differed from previous years: basic instruction grants were frozen at the 1992-93 rates; transportation grants were reduced by 10% over the 1992-93 figure; and twenty-two specific program grants were combined and reduced by 8% over 1992-93 figures. By comparing budget data obtained from Alberta Education for individual school jurisdictions for the 1992-93 and 1993-94 financial years, it was

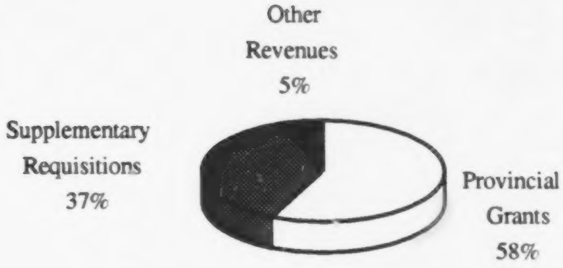

Figure 4.1

Provincial and Local Share of Basic Education Funding 1993-94

calculated that the impact of the change in grant formulae varied among jurisdictions, from $3.26 million less (received in 1993-94 in total grants) to $5.40 million more. On average, school jurisdictions in the small category received $117 763 more grant moneys than in the previous financial year; school jurisdictions in the medium category on average received $674 903 more than in the previous year. The following table presents a more detailed analysis of the difference in grants (that is, SFPF and other moneys) received between 1992-93 and 1993-94 by school jurisdictions throughout the province.

Table 4.2

Difference in Grants Between 1992-93 and 1993-94
(N = 139)[1]

Jurisdiction Category	No Difference	Decrease	Increase
Small	3 (3.8%)	37 (33.9%)	69 (63.3%)
Medium	-	7 (28%)	18 (72%)
Large	-	1 (20%)	4 (80%)

Note: figures in parentheses indicate percentages for category.

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[1] For both Tables 4.2 and 4.3, Alberta Education figures for school jurisdictions which were being "collectively managed" (see page 71) were combined to ensure consistency of the units of measurement between the different data sources.

Overall, 45 (32.4%) Alberta school jurisdictions received less in provincial grant funding than the previous year, and 91 (65.5%) received more.

In recognition that grant money was only one portion of each jurisdiction's budget, the following table was compiled to facilitate the comparison of total actual expenditure for 1992-93 and budgeted expenditure (as agreed between individual jurisdictions and Alberta Education) for 1993-94.

Table 4.3

Difference in Budgeted Expenditures Between 1992-93 and 1993-94
(N = 139)[1]

Jurisdiction Category	Decrease	Increase
Small*	27 (24.8%)	80 (73.4%)
Medium	6 (24%)	19 (76%)
Large	2 (40%)	3 (60%)

Note: *1993-94 figures not available for 2 jurisdictions; figures in parentheses indicate percentages for category.

That is, in 1993-94, 35 (25.2%) of all provincial school jurisdictions are operating on reduced budgets (compared to 1992-93). The corollary is that 102 jurisdictions (73.4%) are operating on increased budgets. Data were unavailable for two jurisdictions (1.4%).

Increases or decreases in Table 4.2 may reflect demographic and/or administrative changes whereas increases or decreases in Table 4.3 may also reflect use of reserve funds and/or other budgetary strategies. How the individual jurisdictions perceived their financial status and assessed the impact of changes to the grant formulae for themselves, can best be seen by presenting the results of the survey and interviews.

Results of the Survey and Interviews

To highlight general patterns in the responses, each of the following sections includes a statistical account of the findings; responses gleaned from open-ended questionnaire items and interview data are interspersed where appropriate; demographic and budget data obtained from analysis of computer printouts provided by Alberta Education in September 1993 are also presented to add depth of knowledge and demonstrate the consistency of participants' responses with "official" provincial records or to reveal divergent perceptions.

Organizational/Financial Status of Jurisdictions

Part I of the survey sought to discriminate between those respondent jurisdiction CEOs who identified their organizations as involved in downsizing and those who felt they were either able to maintain the *status quo* or were increasing the size of their organizations. Only those who identified their jurisdictions as involved in downsizing or as reducing their planned expenditure per student were required to complete the entire questionnaire. Other respondents were requested to proceed to the final section of the survey which sought total budget figures for the 1992-93 and the 1993-94 fiscal years as well as any other comments respondents might have wished to make about the study topic.

Organizational Status

In Question 1, exactly 50% of the respondents (n = 120) indicated that their jurisdiction was downsizing. Alternatively, 41.7% (50 respondents) identified their status as stable, and 9.2% (11 respondents) described their organizations as expanding. Total responses to this question yielded 100.9% response rate (121 responses) due to one respondent selecting two of the three alternative options.

Financial Status

Respondents differentiated their jurisdiction's financial status from their jurisdiction's organizational status in Question 2 when 32.5% (39) indicated they were reducing their expenditure per student in 1993-94; 60% (72 respondents) identified expenditure per student as stable; and, 7.5% (9 respondents) indicated their jurisdictions were increasing expenditure per student.

Strategies for Increasing Revenue

CEOs, regardless of their jurisdiction's organizational or financial status, were provided with the opportunity to offer an indication, if applicable, of what actions they were taking, or were intending to take, to increase their revenue. Seventy-six responses identified 19 different action categories; 42.1% (32 responses) indicated action to increase local requisitions/taxes, with the next most popular proposal (25%) being to increase student/user fees (usually by textbook rentals and/or bus fees).

Other identified actions included seeking revisions (in some instances, by legal action) of grants received from Alberta Education, providing services for fees to other jurisdictions, reviewing boundaries, forming satellite districts (possibly a euphemism for some form of amalgamation), increasing non-resident enrollments, improving student retention, providing services to non-resident home-schoolers, offering a foreign student program, increasing fees for use of facilities, selling assets, seeking partnerships/sponsorships with local industries/corporations, establishing educational foundations, increasing parent/community fundraising, and various means of decreasing expenditures by reviewing administrative operations and policies (such as class sizes).

Profile of Respondent Jurisdictions

The 71 respondents who identified their organizations as downsizing and/or their jurisdiction's expenditure per student as decreasing, were then requested to proceed with the remainder of the questionnaire in order to identify the decision-making processes their organizations had used when confronted by such financial imperatives as the need to downsize/reduce expenditure, and to indicate which downsizing/restraint strategies had evolved from those processes. The following table presents a breakdown of respondent jurisdictions in terms of their status as identified by their CEO.

Table 4.4

Respondents Categorized as per Organizational/Financial Status
(n - 120)

Jurisdiction Size	Downsizing/Reducing (n - 71)	Stable/Increasing (n - 49)	Total Responses for Jurisdiction Category (%n - 120)
Small	51 (54.8%)	42 (45.2%)	93 (77.5%)
Medium	18 (75%)	6 (25%)	24 (20%)
Large	2 (66.7%)	1 (33.3%)	3 (2.5%)
Total	71 (59.2%)	49 (40.8%)	120 (100%)

Note: figures in parentheses in columns 2 and 3 indicate percentage of category.

Of the 120 respondents, 42.5% were small jurisdictions involved in downsizing/reducing expenditure and 35% were small jurisdictions either stable or increasing expenditure. Of the remaining 22.5% respondents, 20% were medium or large jurisdictions involved in downsizing/reducing expenditure.

Comparisons between data presented in Table 4.4 and data from Alberta Education (Table 4.5) for the same jurisdictions (n = 120) show that 50 jurisdictions (or 41.7% of respondents), whilst having increased their annual budgets (in actual dollar terms--which may be due to some of the strategies mentioned above, such as increased local taxes, increased enrollments, or student fees) considered themselves to be downsizing/reducing expenditure per student. This was borne out by comments made in response to various other items on the questionnaire. For example: "Our pupil population is growing and our number of schools is increasing, our manpower/unit of work is decreasing: we are both downsizing and expanding, simultaneously."

Conversely, nine jurisdictions (or 7.5% of respondents) which had decreased budgets for 1993-94, did not indicate they were downsizing or reducing expenditure per student. The researcher was not able to provide further detailed comparisons on the basis of differences in expenditure per student due to the unavailability of 1993-94 enrollment data at the time of the study.

Table 4.5

Respondents Categorized as per Difference Between Budgets for 1992-93 and 1993-94
(n = 120)

Jurisdiction Size	Decrease	Increase	Total for Category
Small	23 (24.7%)	70 (75.3%)	93
Medium	6 (25%)	18 (75%)	24
Large	1 (33.3%)	2 (66.7%)	3
Total	30 (25%)	90 (75%)	120 (100%)

Note: figures in parentheses in columns 2 and 3 indicate percentage of category.

Forty-five jurisdictions (or 37.5% of respondents, n = 120) who indicated they were downsizing or reducing expenditure per student received an increase in grants (which, again may have been due to increased enrollments or new eligibility for various categories of grants), and 13 jurisdictions (or 10.8% of respondents) which received less funding did not indicate they were downsizing or reducing expenditure per student.

Of the 120 respondents to the survey, cross tabulation of data from Alberta Education further revealed that 24 jurisdictions (20%) which received a decrease in grants were operating on a decreased budget; 15 jurisdictions (12.5%) which received a decrease in grants were operating on increased budgets; 5 jurisdictions (4.2%) which received an increase in grants were operating on a decreased budget; and 75 jurisdictions (62.5%) which received an increase in grants were operating on an increased budget. (Only one jurisdiction received the same in grants and it was operating on a decreased budget.)

Specific Responses to Financial Constraint

Part II (Questions 4 - 10) of the survey instrument was designed to explore the range of specific strategic responses and the extent to which they had been selected by downsizing jurisdictions in dealing with financial constraint. Unless otherwise specified, "downsizing jurisdictions" is hereinafter used to refer to the 71 respondents who, in Part I of the survey instrument, identified their systems as engaged in downsizing activities and/or reducing expenditure per student.

While eliciting responses in Part II on the outcomes of the decision-making processes, before asking respondents to recall the processes themselves in Part III of the survey instrument, may seem illogical, this purposive sequencing of items was in deference to Chaffee's (1982) claims about the difficulties involved in studying decision making processes (see page 67) and was intended to assist respondents in belatedly recalling the abstract processes they may otherwise have had difficulty in remembering--by having them first identify the concrete outcomes.

Downsizing/Budget Reduction Goals

Respondents from jurisdictions which were downsizing and/or operating reduced budgets variously identified their jurisdiction's downsizing/budget reduction goals in terms of dollars and/or numbers of staff. Twenty-five respondents indicated their budget reduction goals were between $56 000 and $4 500 000, yielding a mean of $683 320. For some jurisdictions, such figures simply meant the "elimination of unsupported debt"; others indicated their cuts as "0% increase in [salary] costs for 1993-94" or "increasing expenditure while decreasing staff."

Staff reduction goals for individual jurisdictions ranged between 1 and 21 full time equivalent positions (FTEs)--sometimes expressed as a percentage; overall, a reduction of 148 staff (two of which were specifically linked to a decrease in enrollment) was identified by 26 respondents. Comments proffered by respondents generally revealed that numbers of part-time relief (PTR) staff and support staff in particular were reduced, but senior administrative positions had also been identified. The "decision [was] made to 'fit' [the] accepted budget" was the goal stated by one jurisdiction; for others the designation of a specific "program cut" or a reduced "supplies budget" served a similar purpose. Another jurisdiction indicated a shift in organizational philosophy--to "cost recovery" for certain services (for example, bussing within the town area).

A teacher interviewed in the post-survey phase of the study, in commenting about the appropriateness of goals for downsizing, identified her/his jurisdiction's potential to "cut too much" in such budgetary exercises. The teacher noted that during cutbacks experienced during the early 1980s:

> When they downsized then, it seemed like they went too far, because they had to hire more teachers again in the fall. . . . And probably if we have to go through downsizing again, I would expect once again they'd probably downsize a little bit further than they have to, and then if people are still in town, offer them jobs as positions become open.

Of the 61 respondents who indicated a time span (ranging from one month to three years) for achieving their jurisdiction's downsizing goal, 42.6% identified 12 months, 16.4% identified two years, and the remainder fell into clusters of either one to two months (that is, within the transition from the 1992-93 to the 1993-94 academic year), three to six months, or over a period of three years.

The request for respondents to provide copies of their downsizing goal statements elicited one document--the only jurisdiction to indicate that it had formulated such a statement--which was, in effect, the organizational mission statement including reference to provision of an effective educational program "in a fiscally responsive manner" rather than specified tangible outcomes of the downsizing process itself. One senior district administrator interviewed for the study suggested there is "no good measure [for setting goals] when you look at the human side of it," but did recognize the need for such goals to be set and was able to state that her/his jurisdiction had "absolutely" met their current target for financial restraint.

Downsizing/Budget Reduction Strategies

Thirty-four specific downsizing/budget reduction strategies were listed in Question 7, with a request for respondents to indicate all of those which their jurisdictions had decided to use. There was also provision for respondents to identify strategies which had been omitted from the list. While the response rate for each of the options is presented in order of frequency in Table 4.6.1, mainly those strategies with frequencies of more than 50% were selected for special mention in the following text, categorized under four primary headings. (Table 4.6.2, Appendix H, presents response rates for each of the strategies in order of frequency within each of the four categories.)

Table 4.6.1

Rank Ordering of Strategies Used by Downsizing Jurisdictions to Meet Downsizing/Budget Goals
(n = 71)

Strategy	f	%f	Rank Order
26) Reduction of capital expenditures	53	74.6	1
33) Implementation of energy conservation program	52	73.2	2
3) Reducing new hirings/natural attrition of classroom teachers	51	71.8	3
6) Early/voluntary retirements	46	68.4	4
2) Reducing new hirings/natural attrition of secretarial and para-professional staff	44	62.0	5
1) Reducing new hirings/natural attrition of middle/senior administrative staff	40	56.3	6
12) Intra-jurisdiction reassignment of teaching/certificated staff	38	53.5	7
27) Reduction in purchases of instructional supplies/materials	36	50.7	8
34) Increased use of office technology	34	47.9	9
30) Reduction of levels of service	33	46.5	10
31) Programs cut selectively	32	45.1	11
19) Contracting out services including: custodial, psychological assessment, transportation, special needs consultancies, maintenance (plumbing, electrical etc.)	30	42.3	12
25) Reduction of maintenance of facilities	28	39.4	13
28) Reduction in purchases of library materials	23	32.4	14
29) Negotiation of reduction in salaries	22	31.0	15

Table 4.6.1 (continued)

Strategy	f	%f	Rank Order
14) Intra-jurisdiction reassignment of other staff including: teacher aides, secretarial, special education teachers, teacher-librarians, support staff, computer co-ordinators, bus drivers.	21	29.6	17
17) Increased leave opportunities for staff	21	29.6	17
20) Restructuring by adopting site (i.e. school) based management to reduce central office staff	21	29.6	17
4) Reducing new hirings/natural attrition of specialist staff (e.g., teacher-librarians)	20	28.2	19.5
7) Voluntary severance (incentives offered to those who choose to leave, but not of retirement age)	20	28.2	19.5
5) Reducing new hirings/natural attrition of professional support staff (e.g., curriculum consultants)	19	26.8	21
13) Intra-jurisdiction reassignment of administrative staff	16	22.5	22.5
18) Sale of assets	16	22.5	22.5
24) Amalgamation with another jurisdiction	11	15.5	24
22) School closures	10	14.1	25
23) School amalgamations	9	12.7	26
35) Other measures including: transferring facilities to local government to operate, reduction of inservice and conference costs, reduction of professional development programs, reduction in support staff hours, less evaluations (programs, schools), efforts to reduce absenteeism	8	11.2	27
15) Provision of special training in new/enhanced skills to displaced staff	6	8.5	28
8) Enforced severance based on seniority	5	7.0	30.5
9) Enforced severance based on performance criteria/merit	5	7.0	30.5
16) Loan/transfer of staff to other jurisdictions	5	7.0	30.5
21) Restructuring by alternative methods including: reassignment of head office staff, shared service agreements with other jurisdictions, restructuring head office, regrouping students.	5	7.0	30.5

Table 4.6.1 (continued)

Strategy	f	%f	Rank Order
10) Enforced severance based on other criteria including: declaring incumbents of eliminated positions redundant; non-renewal of contracts; deferred salary leaves; increased pupil-teacher ratio; pooling of special education resources; changing full-time to part-time positions (e.g.. bus drivers)	4	5.6	33
32) Programs cut across the board	4	5.6	34
11) Provision of outplacement aid to displaced staff	3	4.2	35

Reduction of staff. By far the most frequently chosen strategy within this category was the reduction of staff by the natural attrition of classroom teachers (chosen by 71.8% of the downsizing respondents), including non-renewal of temporary contracts. Early/voluntary retirements were selected by 64.8%, followed by the natural attrition of secretarial and para-professional staff (62%) and natural attrition of middle/senior administrative staff (56.3%). Natural attrition of specialist and/or professional support staff (28.2% and 26.8% respectively) were indicated to be far less popular strategies, as was voluntary severance (28.2%).

Despite the preceding results, it appears that the perception of people within schools may be that classroom teachers are the last positions to be cut. In the words of one interviewee:

> People in those [non-teaching] positions, especially our secretarial staff, have no association or anything else to defend them, and I think what has happened in the school system is, the cuts have been made at that level in preference to the classroom-teacher level. At least, that is what is taking place at our school. If anything, our teaching staff actually increased in size possibly by one person from last year to this year, but the cut was all at the clerical level and the janitorial level, and the maintenance at district level. But at least in our school, because of school-based budgeting, that was a school-based decision, whereas in another school it could be totally different. . . . The district does reduce funding to schools which indirectly leads to less hours, or staff.

Similarly, other interviewees also reported it was the cuts made to the support staff that were most visible:

> Now, in terms of crunch with people, I don't think they've seen a lot of it yet. They have seen some in support staff, and that was very difficult last year, very difficult for people, I would say. There were some support staff in schools, and those would be mostly assistants for special-needs children, some kindergarten assistants, that sort of thing, just because, again, their budgets were reduced, and they needed to take it from where they could, so they moved on support. Centrally, we've lost a lot of support staff. We have a service center that provides printing and binding and those sorts of services, our maintenance center; both those areas saw substantial reductions, and that was where most of it has come out, was support.

Interviewees also provided examples of specialist staff who had been made redundant using the situation as an incentive to launch successful consultancy businesses--particularly in the psychological services field.

Enforced severances (whether based seniority on any other criteria) were notably unpopular but were still selected variously by 5.6% to 7% of the downsizing jurisdictions. The provision of outplacement aid to displaced personnel similarly scored poorly (4.2%) in tandem with the low occurrence of enforced staff severance/displacement, though both human resource managers who participated in the post-survey interviews stressed the importance of providing not only counseling assistance to those whose employment had been terminated, but also some reassurance to employees remaining within the organization. While one of the respondents to the survey noted that the outplacement aid which had been provided in her/his jurisdiction had been limited to what services were available through an Employee Assistance Program (certainly an alternative to non-provision due to the expense of many commercial outplacement services), a comment made by an employee from another jurisdiction during interview praised instances in which organizations were known to have provided such services:

> My husband works at [a large corporation], and there's been big layoffs there, and they have a consultant down there helping people fill out

> resumés, finding good jobs for them, and I don't think there's really anyone that hasn't found a job yet that this lady hasn't [helped with]; and [the company] is really good to have that, really, isn't it?

Feedback from former employees caused another jurisdiction's human resources officer to comment:

> All [of the people who have left the organization] and have used our out-placement [services] have expressed a lot of gratitude, I guess, in the way it's handled, and have gone on to other things with a positive attitude.

Within that same jurisdiction, the motivation for providing outplacement services was expressed within the wider context of ensuring that all staff are adequately catered for in the event of layoffs being necessary:

> Any time that you downsize, there's two things you have to worry about: first of all, the people that are leaving: You want to treat them in a fair manner; you want to leave them with their dignity; you want to leave them with some hope; and you want to do everything you can to ease their transition into the outside world out there. . . . Also we have a severance package that we did develop, each one of these on an individual basis, that certainly helped the transition as well. And then the other thing that we are looking at is survivors that are left after the program to make sure the morale is where it has to be to provide a service out there to our students, and we've done everything we can with our principals in helping staff handle the situation.

The only pattern to emerge from the frequencies of the various staff reduction strategies was a distinct preference by jurisdictions for self initiated severance of staff members. Further analysis also indicated that 20 (28.2%) of the downsizing jurisdictions chose to use a combination of four strategies from this category and 19 (26.8%) downsizing jurisdictions chose to use a combination of two strategies. The highest combination of strategies used was seven--chosen by eight (or 11.3%) of the downsizing jurisdictions.

An alternative approach to reduction of staff has been the reduction of hours for specific categories of school jurisdiction employees. A school custodian provided the following insights into her/his acceptance of this alternative:

> [Previously] when they were going to move me to night shift I said, "I don't need this. I'll go find a different job." But there's not too many jobs out there to go and find. So [now what] I preach to my members, and I have to preach to myself, is, "Hey, you still have a job. It may be night shift or it may be split shifts, at two different schools, but I still have a job."

Redeployment of staff. Within this category, teaching/certificated staff were again the focus of the various strategies recording high frequencies; 53.5% of the respondents (n = 71) indicated they had chosen to reassign such staff within the jurisdiction. The next most preferred strategies within this category were the intra-jurisdictional reassignment of staff such as teacher aides and secretaries and the provision of increased leave opportunities, each acquiring frequencies equivalent to 29.6%. Perusal of the frequencies recorded for Question 7, Items 13-16, in Table 4.6.2 identifies the lesser extent to which other options were chosen.

Opportunities for secondment of staff (for example, to Alberta Education) were also identified by respondents as redeployment strategies. Twenty-eight (39.4%) of the downsizing jurisdictions chose to use at least one redeployment strategy whereas 15 (21.1%) did not choose any strategies within this category.

The potential "success" of redeployment strategies was described by one teacher interviewee:

> When the downsizing started . . . our vice-principal left, and one of the positions at district office that had been cut, that person came into our school as vice-principal.
>
> The vice-principal who left was really, really good, and so [the redeployee from district office] had a tough time stepping into those sorts of shoes, and he was actually more of an elementary-school person. He did a decent job as far as most staff members were concerned, and when he left we didn't really want to see him go . . . [although originally] we would have preferred at the school level to have seen a competition for the vice-principalship instead of someone just being put into the position.

Rationalization of assets and services. The option of contracting out services (in particular, custodial, psychological, and transportation) was chosen by 42.3% of the downsizing jurisdictions as a means of rationalizing services in the downsizing/cost reduction process. Devolution of central office management/administration to schools was also identified as a chosen strategy by 29.6% of respondents for its potential to reduce central office staff; although comments received both on the questionnaire and in the post-survey interviews emphasized that school-based management had not always been implemented with cost-savings in mind, nor did participants of the study believe it necessarily achieved them. Increased delegation to schools of selected aspects of budget management was cited as an alternative to total devolution of school management responsibilities and acknowledged by several interviewees as moving the locus of the decision making regarding downsizing closer to the client base:

> School-based administrators have control of their budgeting process. They're expected to, and it's an expectation in our district, that you involve parents and you involve teachers in that process, and it's not an administrator sitting in an office that does this. It's based on your priorities that are given to you by your stakeholders in your particular school setting. So very much what we're modeling centrally, they're expected to live by in their own school communities.

Such devolution of budgetary decision making was generally not without some direction from the central office:

> We are monitoring their budgeting related to their priorities, so we need to see their priorities, they need to be aligned with our strategic plan, and then the priorities are based on their school needs as well. The two come linked together.

And from a principal in another jurisdiction:

> We were told [by central office to cut] support services within our schools. That means keeping any cuts away from the classroom, but [cutting] teacher-librarians, administration, counseling, coordination, and learning assistance [teachers]. . . . At a school level we could determine if there were programs we weren't going to cut at all, if there were programs we were going to eliminate [or] . . . how deep we wanted to cut in particular areas. And so we've been given that kind of freedom,

> but there's strings attached. And the strings are that you have to involve your School Advisory Committee in the decision, you have to involve your teachers in the decision.

For one jurisdiction which the researcher visited and which had moved substantially to school-based management prior to the latest onset of fiscal constraint, there was ready acknowledgment by a senior administrator that such a management structure facilitated the district's budgetary deliberations:

> We are on school-based decision making as well, so our facilities develop their own budgets, and there is a requirement for staff and parent involvement in there. Our organizational structure speaks very much to involvement and decision making as close as possible to our students, so there is a lot of ownership and there is a lot of opportunity to set local budgets at the school level.
>
> In our case we [moved to school-based management] at a time when we were in a very healthy situation, and we've been involved in it for several years now.

Jurisdictional amalgamations, a topic pursued publicly by Alberta Education and the Alberta School Boards' Association (Alberta Education, 1993b; Government of Alberta, 1994c) and by several school boards via the daily media, while only being chosen by a small proportion of respondents attracted a number of comments from survey respondents and interviewees--in particular trustees, who, while recognizing a potential to rationalize/share services with neighboring jurisdictions, were quite emphatic that amalgamations which compromised the belief systems of their jurisdictions were totally unacceptable. Typical of the comments made in this regard were:

> There's a lot of areas that we can cooperate on, and [which] aren't going to impact on the whole essence of the Catholic schools, and that's something I would never ever compromise on;

and,

> There are areas where we have to look at some of the services and how we're providing them and see if we can't share them. . . . I think when you do have fiscal restraint, you start to really look at everything that you're doing and look at all your efficiencies. So in many ways I think

> it's good to see if there isn't a better way to deliver some of the things we are delivering, too.

Identified by one CEO as an "active strategy" (by which it was assumed to be in the discussion stage), amalgamation of jurisdictions was also identified as "possible" by four others and redefined as "partnerships" or "shared service agreements" by at least four more. The options of school closures and school amalgamations drew comments that signaled jurisdictions were generally undertaking public consultation on the issue prior to any such action. Reorganizations were also mentioned as alternatives to closures.

A rationalization (or restructuring) option not included on the questionnaire yet identified by two interviewees from the same jurisdiction but from different perspectives was integration. In the words of a teacher:

> There is a concern, though, that we're also starting to integrate some of our special-needs kids into classes, and this is being seen by some people as a way to save money, because currently, for example, there are six of us teaching special-needs kids, and if you could integrate all these kids, you could probably eliminate two of those positions completely.

On the other hand, for a district consultant/administrator, integration had different ramifications as a strategy for downsizing; a central office contingent of fifteen specialist consultants had been reduced to two teams of four each, both working on an "inclusive education model." This was recognized as being more demanding for team members but was also seen to have precipitated closer links between special education and mainstream education policies and practices throughout the district.

Another variation on the cooperation (as opposed to amalgamation) scenario which had been considered by one jurisdiction was the possibility of rationalizing aspects of services offered by the Departments of Education, Health, Social Services, and Justice at the local level with possibly the school as the central focus. The interviewee who described this proposal indicated that even the establishment of a formal protocol for cooperation among these government entities at the local level could save both considerable human (especially time) and financial resources.

Twenty (or 28.2%) of the downsizing jurisdictions did not choose any strategies from this category, while the same number also chose to use a combination of two strategies. Eighteen (25.4%) of the downsizing jurisdictions used just one rationalization strategy in responding to financial constraint.

Reduction of direct spending. By far the most frequent responses in this category of downsizing/cost reduction strategies were for the reduction of capital expenditures and the implementation of energy conservation programs (74.6% and 73.2% of responses respectively)--one jurisdiction noting that they had contracted an energy savings performance consultant. Other responses indicated that a number of strategies in this category had been selected as complementary, particularly reductions both in the purchase of materials and levels of service (counseling and library services receiving special mentions in these cases). Increased use of technology was also selected by just under half of the respondents, although comments indicated that implementation of office automation projects had already been planned, irrespective of their potential to achieve savings, or, by some accounts, to incur additional costs.

Within this same category, an alternative identified to the option of reduction in salaries was the "0% contract for 1993-94" negotiated by at least two jurisdictions. The prospect of wage rollbacks arose during several interviews (with teachers and custodial staff), accompanied, as could be expected, by total opposition. In one jurisdiction it was acknowledged that:

> In looking at our school system, its financial situation, we have an operating surplus . . . plus a rather large capital surplus. They're able to absorb [the increase in salaries], at least for this year. And so at least until June everyone currently on staff will be on staff, and it will not be until the further cuts are announced in January that we'll begin to see the

> implications. But as of right now, people are generally opposed. . . . The fact that our school system is willing to basically eat the wage increase until June without really having come to schools yet to ask for cuts in budgets. I think that's creating some positive feelings among teachers, because they see that the school system isn't out to reduce their salary, whereas they know in other places that's what people are trying to do.

Only one downsizing jurisdiction did not choose any of the strategies from within this category with the most prevalent combination being three strategies chosen by 16 (or 22.5%) of respondents who were downsizing/reducing expenditure.

Changes to Personnel Employment Policies and Practices

In addition to using the aforementioned strategies, respondents were also asked to indicate if their jurisdictions had changed their employment/personnel policies and/or practices in direct response to financial constraint. Four options for indicating possible changes were offered, with 29.6% (that is, 21 of the downsizing jurisdictions) responding that they had chosen to use more part-time staff. Fourteen responses were recorded to indicate that 19.7% of the downsizing jurisdictions were requiring (or desiring) beginning teachers to have specializations in more than one area; 12 responses (or 16.9%) indicated they had decided to increase the number and/or range of professional development programs available in order to provide wider expertise within existing staff. Two jurisdictions (2.8% of downsizing respondents) also indicated they had made other changes to personnel practices/policies: more use of para-professionals rather than certificated staff; less use of part-time teachers to save the costs of benefits; more consciousness of hiring staff on the lower end of the salary grid; and job sharing. The anomaly of job sharing being perceived as both an expense and a viable financial strategy was explained during a discussion with a senior administrator; for her/his jurisdiction, job sharing was identified as "more expensive rather than cost containment" due to the district's contractual obligations to pay for full employment benefits for each "job sharer" instead of pro rata entitlements as negotiated by other jurisdictions. A more viable employment strategy identified as working well for the jurisdiction was described as "project employment":

> When we go to project, then we are not covering such things as benefits. And we've moved to that in terms of a lot of support positions, so we are looking at project kinds of positions that are time specific rather than employing somebody for an indefinite period or on a permanent contract.

This strategy included an emphasis on the proviso that such positions would not be ongoing, as had tended to happen on previous occasions when individuals' employment in particular positions had been extended despite the original need no longer existing.

A large percentage (46.4%, or 33 respondents) of downsizing jurisdictions did not indicate they had made any changes to personnel policies/practices as a response to financial constraint.

Redeployment/Redundancy Policies

Of the 69 responses to Question 9, 35 (or 50.7%) of the CEOs of downsizing jurisdictions indicated their systems had formal redeployment/redundancy policies, with 19 respondents (26.8%) returning copies of those policies with their questionnaires. Two jurisdictions further indicated that their policies were included in their current collective bargaining agreement. A cursory content analysis of the policy documents which were provided by the respondents was based on a number of major elements identified in the literature on school employment contracts and practices (Johnson, 1982).

Background statements. All of the policies , whether two paragraphs in length (the shortest) or five pages, had some sort of introductory or background policy statement detailing the conditions or bases on which reduction in staff may be necessary for that jurisdiction. Many of these statements recognized that financial constraint or declining enrollments would likely be the reason for a change to the number of staff a jurisdiction could employ. Some also included an awareness that changes in students' educational needs, new or revised curricula or program priorities, and/or changes in the functions of the various educational facilities could also impact the organization's employee profile. Several of the statements emphasized the responsibility or need for the jurisdiction to maintain the quality of the educational program in the previously mentioned retrenchment scenarios.

Guidelines/regulations. All except six of the policy documents provided guidelines for proceeding with a reduction-in-staff program, several including recommendations for transfers prior to the commencement of any layoffs. Specific regulations to be used by administrators in any such action were also provided by seven of the jurisdictions. Where various reduction-in-staff strategies were prioritized, invariably the emphasis was on attrition followed by voluntary retirements and resignations. Several policies also included some sort of statement that any staff reductions would only be considered after all other budget reduction strategies had been exhausted. Other reduction-in-staff strategies mentioned specifically included special leaves of absence, and changes in status from full-time to part-time employment for some staff.

Criteria for layoffs. While all the received policies were in respect of professional/certificated staff, four policies were also applicable for support staff, with one document detailing specific procedures and criteria for senior administrative staff in the jurisdiction's central office. Criteria for layoffs of professional staff (with only two exceptions) mentioned qualifications, competency and seniority, six documents listing them in that order; only one policy listed seniority as the first criterion; the remaining policies indicated that all criteria would be considered concurrently. A small number of jurisdictions placed such criteria as: "Witnessing and the teacher's contribution to the school community's call to witness Jesus Christ"; "Individual's initiative and cooperation in promoting favorable staff relationships and learning environments"; "Compatibility of the individual to system expectations"; "The teacher's commitment to their own ongoing professional development as related on updated teacher profiles and the evaluation instrument"; and, "The compatibility of the teacher's skill, knowledge and attitudes with desired student outcomes" as priorities, in most cases before seniority. Where competency was mentioned there was also quite often an indication that any assessment would be based on previous formal performance appraisals. Details of determining seniority were spelled out in several of the documents. There were also several inclusions of experience in the district and/or program requirements/specializations as criteria.

One study participant (a teacher) suggested that performance appraisal would not be used as a layoff criterion in her/his district:

> Usually, if someone isn't performing acceptably in the school district, they do have a very good process by which they offer assistance and go through a process of natural justice and everything else, and I think our system would probably do a good job of weeding those people out . . . [so] they shouldn't have to use downsizing to get rid of people who aren't doing a good job, because the systems already in place are really good for identifying if someone does have a problem, trying to help them overcome the problem.

This perception was reinforced by a principal in the jurisdiction who felt the need to cut more staff would necessarily have to be via "a bumping system . . . and then the low man on the totem pole would be laid off." While that may be the case for teachers, the only valid criterion for custodial staff was revealed during an interview as "strictly seniority."

Legalities. All except three policy documents referred to the legal foundations of the policies in the provincial statutes and/or the right of staff to legal counsel should they receive notice of termination. 1979 was the earliest formulation/ adoption date of the documents, with two having been revised in 1993. Over half of the policies had been revised on indeterminate schedules, one document having been reviewed/revised six times between 1984 and 1993. Many of the origin or review dates clustered around the time of declining enrollments in the early 1980s.

A feature of several of the documents was a statement of intention that the policies would be put into practice "in a reasonable manner and in good faith," some making provision for the establishment of a "recall list" as an indication of concern for employees' long-term welfare.

Decision-Making Processes Used in Responding to Financial Constraint

Part III of the survey instrument was designed to elicit downsizing jurisdiction CEOs' recollections of the decision-making processes they had used in responding to perceived financial constraints.

Bases of Information for Decision Making

The first question of this section (Question 11) asked respondents to what extent, from "not at all" to "exclusively," five decision-making bases of information which were identified in the literature (Nutt, 1984; Chabotar, 1987) had been used by their jurisdictions in determining downsizing/budget reduction strategies. Results are presented in Table 4.7.

Financial forecasting techniques as well as individual judgment appeared to be the most favored bases selected by downsizing respondents. Generally, these were used in conjunction with a number of other bases to varying degrees: over 26.8% of respondent downsizing jurisdictions selected all five of the options listed, with the most popular combination being the first four options selected by 42.3%. The technical approach afforded by combining financial forecasting and information from computerized management data base/s was used to some degree by at least 64.8%, and 94.4% of downsizing respondents selected financial forecasting as at least one information source. Even a quick perusal of the response rate to this question indicates that respondents who indicated that they had used one basis/source

Table 4.7

Rank Ordering of Information Bases Used to Determine Downsizing/Budget Reduction Strategies

Basis	Extent Used Not at all 1	2	3	4	Exclusively 5	n	Mean	SD	Rank Order
3) Individual judgment of decision makers	5	6	13	35	4	63	3.43	1.03	1
1) Financial forecasting techniques	1	8	20	35	1	65	3.42	0.79	2
4) Bargaining between decision makers	13	11	20	17	1	62	2.71	1.14	3
2) Computer management data base/s	15	11	13	19	1	59	2.66	1.23	4
6) Other including: consultant, trustees/board members, think-tank, program priority exercise, various modes of collaboration	4	2	2	2	1	11	2.46	1.44	5
5) An inspired resolution presented by one person	26	16	11	4	-	57	1.88	0.97	6

Note: Data from pilot study was not admitted into this analysis due to rephrasing of the question as a result of pilot study participants' suggestions.

exclusively also selected other bases/sources to some extent. Consequently, the integrity and/or usefulness of the data for further analysis was questionable and therefore not pursued.

Contextual Influences on Decision Making

In seeking to discover whether political, economic, or legal issues were perceived by respondents as most influential in selecting their jurisdiction's downsizing strategies, the CEOs were asked to prioritize the three types of issues. Table 4.8 presents the results of their responses.

Table 4.8

Rank Ordering of Influence of Issues on Decision Making

Type of Issues	Order of Influence			n	Mean	SD	Rank Order
	Most 1	2	Least 3				
Economic	53	12	4	69	1.29	0.57	1
Political	9	31	24	64	2.23	0.68	2
Legal	7	21	36	64	2.45	0.69	3

Comparison of the means for each option indicates that economic issues were perceived by CEOs to influence predominantly the decision-making processes involved in determining which downsizing/budget reduction strategies were chosen by downsizing jurisdictions. 76.8% of respondents selected this option in contrast to the 14.1% and 10.9% of respondents who chose political or legal issues, respectively, as most influential.

Related to strategies. A cross tabulation of the five different combinations that were selected by respondents for prioritizing the influence of various types of issues with the downsizing/budget reduction strategies chosen by the same respondents indicated some relationships did exist between the two groups of variables. The most substantial differences that could be identified existed between respondents who chose priority sequences of economic/political/legal (26 responses or 42.6% of the 61 respondents who answered this question), economic/legal/political (19 responses or 31.1%) and political/economic/legal (9 responses or 14.8%). The other two priority sequences identified were legal/political/economic and legal/economic/political, which were selected by 4 (6.6%) and 3(4.9%) of respondents, respectively. Figure 4.2 represents a summary (after Hardy, 1990a, p.138) of the prevalent relationships between the influence of different types of issues and the choice of particular downsizing/budget reduction strategies. Strategies were assigned to issues on the basis of the highest percentage return for a particular strategy being identified by respondents who had selected a specific issues sequence. Notably, the priority sequence of economic/political/legal was the only combination of the three types of issues to record any use of enforced severance based on seniority--chosen by 19.2% of the group who prioritized the issues in that order.

In one of the post-survey interviews which was held within days of the announcement by the provincial government of dramatic changes to the governance of school education, a trustee identified the intensified pressure for restructuring as having gained a more political hue than s/he would have identified previously, the economic influences now being seen as political imperatives.

Related to personnel policies/practices. Cross tabulations also revealed that those jurisdictions which prioritized political issues as having the most influence on deciding which strategies were to be used also indicated more propensity than the other groups to modify their personnel practices/policies by requiring (or desiring) beginning teachers to have specializations in more than one area and by increasing the number/range of professional development programs available to provide wider expertise within existing staff; those that indicated legal issues as the most influential had the greatest propensity to modify personnel practices/policies by use of more part-time staff.

		Economic Issues	
		Most Influential	***Less Influential***
Political Issues	***Most Influential***	[No strategies were identified as influenced equally]	Natural attrition of secretarial and paraprofessional staff Voluntary severance
	Less Influential	Natural attrition of middle/senior administrative staff Natural attrition of secretarial and paraprofessional staff Early/voluntary retirements Enforced severance based on seniority Restructuring by adopting school-based management	Sale of assets Contracting out services Restructuring by other than school-based management Natural attrition of classroom teachers Natural attrition of specialist staff Natural attrition of support staff Enforced severance based on merit Enforced severance based on criteria other than merit and/or seniority

[Legal Issues Most Influential]

Figure 4.2

Diagrammatic Representation of Downsizing/Budget Reduction Strategies Chosen as per Respondents' Perception of Influence of Issues

Participation in Decision Making

Options for indicating participation in decision making were limited for the purposes of Question 13 to five groups of people who represented defined constituencies and participated in decision making regarding downsizing by attending meetings or being involved in other formal activities whereat budget reduction decisions were made. The frequency of such involvement is summarized in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9

Rank Ordering of Formal Participants in the Decision-Making Process
(n = 71)

Participants	f	%f	Rank Order
3) Board members	70	98.6	1
2) Principals	63	88.7	2
1) Teachers	38	53.5	3
5) ATA representatives	29	40.8	4
4) Community members	27	38.0	5
6) Others including: central office executive, senior administrators, school paraprofessionals, secretary-treasurers, CUPE, interested local agencies/municipal bodies, students, parish clergy, Alberta Education, FMPSAA.	17	23.9	6

Not surprisingly, the traditionally acknowledged jurisdictional decision makers featured prominently in the respondents' selections. Board members (who would virtually be involved on a *de facto* basis) were indicated as participants by all jurisdictions except one (which did not choose any of the alternatives provided in this question). Principals, as senior administrators, also featured prominently. Less than half of the jurisdictions indicated the participation of community or union/professional association representatives. The predominant pattern of participation (chosen by 53.5%) of downsizing respondents was a combination of board members, teachers and principals.

Interviewees who commented on the participation of occupational or interest groups in decision making regarding downsizing in their jurisdictions identified the evolving commitment of senior administrators to such involvement:

> There have been some suggestions about job sharing, but to date there hasn't been an overly enthusiastic response, because those discussions are with the trustees. One of the things, though, that is changing is that we're going to be setting up a collaborative process whereby the trustees, the senior administration, and our [employee group/union representatives] are going to be getting together, and we're going to be starting to discuss these sorts of things . . . on a regular basis. . . . So we're really quite pleased that we're going to be collaborating well at the school district [level], and that should hopefully make some of these changes a little bit easier to go through.

A trustee from the same jurisdiction was similarly enthusiastic about the proposed collaborative process for related reasons:

> I think too often people perceive boards as making decisions and imposing them down, whereas we want to start at the bottom, and let's work on some of these things together so we buy into it. Then it's easier to implement things.

Alternatively, past decision making relating to downsizing had been seen as a "management prerogative":

> As a classroom teacher, we had no participation. Everything was done or seemed to be done at the principal level and above. There was no consultation with classroom teachers. . . . There was no consultation with the Alberta Teachers' Association. It was simply the district decision.

A Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) member alternatively perceived participation in decision making as somewhat of a token gesture by administrators:

> To be honest, they bring you in, but it's after the fact or it's just when they have all their answers and [are already] doing it, "Well, if you have any suggestions, please feel free to give it." But their minds are already

> made up, so you've got to try and get a leak and get in there before it hits you; before they come to you, you go to them.

Sources of Recommended Strategies

Question 14 of the survey instrument sought to explore further the role of specific individuals and/or their occupational positions as sources of information about downsizing strategies. Some less acknowledged sources (such as reviews of literature) were also incorporated into this question. Once again, after the most frequently selected sources of "past experience of decision makers" and "finance officers within the organization" with 95.8% and 91.5% respectively, there was a notable drop in the frequencies of respondents' selections of other sources. Personnel officers within the organization were acknowledged as sources of information about downsizing strategies by 58 respondents (81.7%) and the informal consultation of colleagues in other jurisdictions was identified as a source by 55 respondents (77.5%)--still relatively high frequencies, but showing a distinct pattern of decision makers overall using a small number of sources. Frequencies for all options are presented in the following Table 4.10.

Even though only five respondents indicated they had used "other" sources of information, nine chose to provide comments on other sources in the space provided. A very distinct pattern did emerge from the data analysis showing 76.1% of respondents used a combination of at least personnel and finance officers and past experience of those involved in the decision making. One respondent indicated (out of the options presented--including space for any omissions) reliance on past experience only.

Table 4.10

Rank Ordering of Sources of Information and Recommendations on Decisions Regarding Downsizing
(n = 71)

Information Sources	f	%f	Rank Order
1) Past experience of decision makers	68	95.8	1
3) Finance officers within the organization	65	91.5	2
2) Personnel officers within the organization	58	81.7	3
8) Colleagues in other jurisdictions--informally	55	77.5	4
6) Reviewing public service trends	36	50.7	5
5) Reviewing business trends	34	47.9	6
7) Reviewing literature	29	40.8	7
10) Representatives from Alberta Education	28	39.4	8
9) Colleagues in other jurisdictions--through formal meetings/communications	20	28.2	9
4) External consultants	8	11.3	10
11) Others, including: ratepayers, parents, community round table, principals, Minister of Education, strategic planning.	5	7.0	11

Decision-making Models/Typologies

Activity sequences. As an introduction to the following lengthy and seemingly eclectically based question (and to serve later as a means for checking internal consistency of responses), Question 15 sought to identify which one of three activity sequences respondents would select as best describing the process they had been involved in when determining which restructuring/downsizing strategies were to be used in their jurisdiction. The three options provided briefly described decision-making models/typologies which were typically associated with strategic decision making in the literature :

1) Problem definition -> consideration of alternatives -> selection of optimum alternative;

2) Uncertainty -> discussion -> a reasonable solution; and,

3) Issue identification -> conflict bargaining.

The great majority of the downsizing respondents (59, or 83.1%) overwhelmingly selected option (1) as best describing the sequence of activities in which they had been involved, with options (2) and (3) receiving 12 (16.9%) and one (1.4%) responses respectively (one respondent selected two of the alternative options).

Related to size of jurisdiction. A cross tabulation of responses to this question by size of jurisdiction yielded frequencies for the different categories of small and medium very much in proportion with their representation in the study. The 100% correlation between large jurisdictions and their CEO's selection of option (1) could not be considered indicative of any generalizable relationship because of previously identified concerns with the small number and non-representative nature of respondents in this category.

Related to strategies. CEOs' choices of decision-making activity sequences were cross tabulated with the downsizing/budget reduction strategies in order to establish any relationships between the two groups of variables. For example, while 22.5% (16 respondents) of all downsizing jurisdictions decided to sell assets as a downsizing strategy, 18.75% of these 16 respondents had also selected option (2)--which was based on the administrative model--to describe their decision-making process, whereas 81.25% of those 16 jurisdictions which decided to sell assets did so in concert with selecting option (1)--the rational model. The same propensity for using the rational model prevailed for all the downsizing/budget reduction strategies.

Characteristics of decision-making models/typologies. Individual characteristics (or criteria (Chaffee, 1984)) of a wider variety of the decision-making models/typologies, summarized as part of the literature review, were defined as 24 variables in the next item on the survey (Question 16). Respondents of downsizing jurisdictions were requested to indicate the frequency (on a five-point scale on which 1 = "never" and 5 = "very often") with which those characteristics had featured in their jurisdiction's decision making regarding downsizing. Table 4.11 reports the means and rank ordering of respondents' recollections.

Of the 24 characteristics, two were identified as featuring in the decision-making processes between often (4) and very often (5); 16 characteristics were identified as featuring between sometimes (3) and often (4); 6 characteristics were identified as featuring between rarely (2) and sometimes (3). Variables grouped by the literature as characteristic of specific models (for example, Items (1), (2), (3), (18) and (19) as being criteria for the "political" model) were not selected by respondents in such combinations as to permit the ready identification of specific decision-making models having been used by jurisdictions in determining their downsizing strategies. In order to explore further the body of data collected in response to this question for underlying patterns, and to establish some sort of correlation between the variables which would facilitate description of the data by a smaller set of factors, the 24 variables were factor analyzed using varimax rotation.

Table 4.11

Rank Ordering of Characteristics Featured in the Downsizing Decision-Making Processes

Characteristic	Extent Featured					n	Mean	SD	Rank Order
	Never 1	2	3	4	Very often 5				
1) Costs and benefits of alternatives were weighed off against each other	-	2	10	33	25	70	4.16	0.77	1
24)You felt the decision-making process was adequate to achieve its goals	-	2	9	43	16	70	4.04	0.69	2
14) Mention was made of "educational values"	1	4	11	33	21	70	3.99	0.91	3
21) Decisions were arrived at by consensus	4	4	12	22	27	69	3.93	1.16	4
18) Mention was made of protecting employee morale	1	6	11	36	16	70	3.86	0.92	5
22) Decisions were based on enough information	-	6	15	34	15	70	3.83	0.87	6
15) Mention was made of "equity"	1	6	17	30	16	70	3.77	0.95	7
17) Economic goals were stated	2	8	13	31	16	70	3.73	1.03	8
20) Decisions were voted upon	6	11	6	24	24	71	3.69	1.32	9
6) Alternatives were considered in a logical sequence	1	6	21	30	13	71	3.68	0.92	10
23)You felt the process was personally stressful	4	10	12	27	17	70	3.61	1.17	11
12) Mention was made of "efficiency"	1	9	21	27	12	70	3.57	0.97	12
7) Alternatives were compared to each other individually	1	8	25	26	10	70	3.51	0.93	13
4) Aspects of the organizational culture were mentioned	5	8	21	26	10	70	3.40	1.10	14

Table 4.11 (continued)

Characteristic	Extent Featured Never 1	 2	 3	 Very often 4	 5	n	Mean	SD	Rank Order
5) There was "fluid participation"	1	17	17	23	11	69	3.38	1.07	15
11) Decisions were mainly influenced by senior officers with specialized expertise/knowledge of personnel and/or finance	3	9	28	23	7	70	3.31	0.97	16
19) Mention was made of accommodating interest groups and stakeholders	2	14	23	24	7	70	3.29	1.00	17
13) Mention was made of "productivity"	3	14	22	25	6	70	3.24	1.01	18
3)There was conflict over alternatives	5	22	29	12	3	71	2.80	0.95	19
16) Serendipitous solutions seemed to evolve	10	24	28	4	1	67	2.43	0.87	20
2) Bargaining was used to arrive at solutions	13	28	23	4	-	68	2.27	0.12	21
10) Decisions involved top management only	25	21	9	11	4	70	2.26	1.26	22
9) There was a sense of "groping" for solutions	17	30	8	4	-	69	2.13	0.86	23
8) There was a sense of "muddling through"	18	34	12	4	1	69	2.07	0.90	24

Table 4.12 reports the varimax factor solution for the characteristics featured in downsizing jurisdictions' decision-making processes using four factors[2] . These four factors represent a data reduction from the 24 characteristics of various decision-making models. A factor loading equal to or greater than 0.4 was used as the

criterion for including a given item in a given factor. Two items were double-loaded, one item did not load, and a total of 23 items loaded on their respective factors.

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[2] Using Kaiser's criterion (Child, 1970) for selection for the number of factors to be extracted would have resulted in 8 factors being identified to account for 69% of the variance whereas the selection of 4 factors was more in keeping with Cattell's (Child) concept of avoiding "factoral litter or scree" and proportionally accounted for a higher percentage of the variance.

Table 4.12

Varimax Factor Solution for 24 Characteristics of Decision Making Using 4 Factors
(n = 71)

Characteristics	Factors and Factor Loadings			
	1 Outcomes	2 Processes	3 Authority	4 Democracy
17) Economic goals were stated	$\boxed{.779}$	-.126	.013	-.021
14) Mention was made of "educational values"	$\boxed{.736}$	.069	.011	-.118
13) Mention was made of "productivity"	$\boxed{.687}$	.111	-.194	-.030
12) Mention was made of "efficiency"	$\boxed{.683}$	-.161	-.039	.025
18) Mention was made of protecting employee morale	$\boxed{.632}$	.163	.300	.128
6) Alternatives were considered in a logical sequence	$\boxed{.624}$	-.225	.089	-.242
5) There was "fluid participation"	$\boxed{.568}$	-.049	-.475	.356
1) Costs and benefits of alternatives were weighed off against each other	$\boxed{.539}$	-.130	-.004	-.180
4) Aspects of the organizational culture were mentioned	$\boxed{.447}$	.521	.013	.002
22) Decisions were based on enough information	.317	$\boxed{-.681}$	-.071	.059
24) You felt the decision-making process was adequate to achieve its goals	.247	$\boxed{-.644}$	-.045	.143
8) There was a sense of "muddling through"	-.990	$\boxed{.641}$	-.066	.323
3) There was conflict over alternatives	.192	$\boxed{.628}$	-.105	-.315

Table 4.12 (continued)

Characteristics	Factors and Factor Loadings			
	1 Outcomes	2 Processes	3 Authority	4 Democracy
9) There was a sense of "groping" for solutions	-.222	.596	.324	.070
2) Bargaining was used to arrive at solutions	.174	.574	.153	.274
4) Aspects of the organizational culture were mentioned	.447	.521	.013	.002
11) Decisions were mainly influenced by senior officers with specialized expertise/knowledge of personnel and/or finance	.219	.033	.760	.067
10) Decisions involved top management only	-.223	-.071	.736	-.014
15) Mention was made of "equity"	-.073	.145	.603	.198
5) There was "fluid participation"	.568	-.049	-.475	.356
23) You felt the process was personally stressful	.359	.338	.429	-.065
20) Decisions were voted upon	.024	-.040	-.159	-.660
21) Decisions were arrived at by consensus	-.106	-.393	.242	.550
16) Serendipitous solutions seemed to evolve	-.216	-.006	-.131	.523
19) Mention was made of accommodating interest groups and stakeholders	.245	.106	.149	.426

The four factors accounted for 49.2% of the total variance and were labeled as follows:

- Factor 1: Outcomes
- Factor 2: Process

- Factor 3: Authority
- Factor 4: Democracy.

The labels appended to each factor for ease of reference tend to conceal a certain degree of complexity. For example, Factor 1, despite the simplicity and brevity of the label, loads items referring to participation, organizational culture, efficiency, productivity, and educational values.

Within Factor 1, each of the items was related to outcomes, many of which were dependent upon some sort of value judgment--what is efficient, productive, of educational value, an appropriate level of employee morale, or a "suitable" level of involvement for certain groups of people? The goal-driven orientation of all the items contributing to this factor encompassed outcomes related to finance, educational programs, and human resources. This factor alone accounted for 18.4% of total variance.

Factor 2 portrayed the ambiguity of the decision-making process; bargaining by decision makers and conflict were associated with the perception that decisions had been made on insufficient information, to the extent that it was doubted the process could achieve its goals. Factor 2 accounted for 13.7 % of total variance.

Factor 3 represented the rigidity of processes usually associated with authority in hierarchies, which in turn, was associated with personal stress for the decision makers. This factor accounted for 9.4% of variance. Factor 4 portrayed a sense of cooperation, including characteristics of decision making that conveyed informal involvement and commitment--a resistance to such formal procedures as voting, and a preference for collaborative processes. Factor 4 accounted for 7.7% of variance.

Overall, the factor analysis permitted several other observations. When features of rational decision making predominantly factored together, there was also expressed concern for such elements as the protection of employee morale and organizational culture. When some features of political decision making factored together, there was expressed dissatisfaction with the adequacy of the information or the process to achieve its goals. Personal stress was most evident when respondents also indicated the process had only involved senior administrators. Features of Factor 1 (Outcomes) and Factor 3 (Authority) seemed to represent opposing values, as did features of Factor 3 (Authority) and Factor 4 (Democracy).

On the basis of the factor analysis it was possible to identify the most prevalent characteristics of decision-making processes used by downsizing jurisdictions. Table 4.13 reports the rank order of the four factors in terms of the extent to which they featured in the decision-making processes of the jurisdictions. This was determined by ranking the factor mean for each of the factors. For each factor, the factor mean was calculated as a mean of individual items loading on that factor, thereby retaining a relationship to the verbal referents of scale in Question 16 where the number (1) indicated that characteristic "never" featured in the decision-making process and (5) indicated the characteristic featured "very often".

CEOs indicated the decision making regarding downsizing/budget restraint in their jurisdiction most often featured characteristics that were outcome oriented ($M = 3.66$), followed by those characteristics associated with authority in decision making ($M = 3.12$). By retaining the relevance to the verbal anchors of the original variables, it appears that decision-making characteristics exemplifying the democracy of the activity featured "sometimes"; and decision-making characteristics concerned with process featured least often (or "rarely").

Table 4.13

Rank Ordering of Factors According to the Extent of Their Use in the Decision-Making Process

Factors and Items	Item Mean	Factor Mean	SD	Rank Order
Factor 1: Outcomes		3.66	0.62	1
17) Economic goals were stated	3.73			
14) Mention was made of "educational values"	3.99			
13) Mention was made of "productivity"	3.24			
12) Mention was made of "efficiency"	3.57			
18) Mention was made of protecting employee morale	3.86			
6) Alternatives were considered in a logical sequence	3.68			
5) There was "fluid participation"	3.38			
1) Costs and benefits of alternatives were weighed off against each other	4.16			
4) Aspects of the organizational culture were mentioned	3.40			
Factor 3: Authority		3.12	0.68	2
11) Decisions were mainly influenced by senior officers with specialized expertise/knowledge of personnel and/or finance	3.31			
10) Decisions involved top management only	2.26			
15) Mention was made of "equity"	3.77			
5) There was "fluid participation"	3.38			
23) You felt the process was personally stressful	3.61			

Factors and Items	Item Mean	Factor Mean	SD	Rank Order
Factor 4: Democracy		2.98	0.68	3
20) Decisions were voted upon	3.69			
21) Decisions were arrived at by consensus	3.93			
16) Serendipitous solutions seemed to evolve	2.43			
19) Mention was made of accommodating interest groups and stakeholders	3.29			
Factor 2: Process		2.44	0.54	4
22) Decisions were based on enough information	3.83			
24) You felt the decision-making process was adequate to achieve its goals	4.04			
8) There was a sense of "muddling through"	2.07			
3) There was conflict over alternatives	2.80			
9) There was a sense of "groping" for solutions	2.13			
2) Bargaining was used to arrive at solutions	2.27			
4) Aspects of the organizational culture were mentioned	3.40			

Note: Item means were taken from Table 4.11.

The higher ranking of Factors 1 and 3 (decision-making activities determined to be concerned with outcomes and authority respectively) over Factors 2 and 4 (concerned with process and democracy) showed substantial consistency with respondents' selection of option (1) (describing a sequence of activities usually associated with the rational model of decision making) and option (2) (describing the administrative model) over option (3) (describing the political model) in Question 15.

Further analysis of CEOs' responses to Questions 15 and 16 only served to show a general consistency by respondents in their selection of decision-making activity sequences in Question 15 and their selection of individual characteristics in Question 16. For example, there was a substantially higher occurrence of Factor 3 (Authority) characteristics (M = 3.58) in the decision making of jurisdictions which also indicated option (2) (administrative model) as their predominant mode of decision making--option (1) had a mean of 3.04 and option (3) had a mean of 3.00 for the same factor.

Related to size of jurisdiction. Each of the four factors was also analyzed by the extent to which it featured in the different sized jurisdictions in order to identify combinations of decision-making characteristics particular to a specific demography, as illustrated by Table 4.14.

Table 4.14

Means of Extent to Which Factors Featured in Different Categories of Jurisdictions

Factor	Means of Extent to Which Factor Featured		
	Small Jurisdictions (n = 51)	Medium Jurisdictions (n = 18)	Large Jurisdictions (n = 2)
1. Outcomes	3.57	3.90	3.83
2. Process	2.38	2.61	2.50
3. Authority	3.18	2.96	3.20
4. Democracy	2.89	3.24	2.88

Note: Means are related to a five-point scale on which 1 = "never" and 5 = "very often".

Comparison of the means revealed no substantial (that is, greater than 0.5) differences for the extent to which the individual factors featured in any of the jurisdictional categories. The only observation made was the slightly higher occurrence of Factors 2 and 4 (Process and Democracy) in medium-sized jurisdictions than in small-sized jurisdictions, and the inverse for Factor 3 (Authority).

Each of the original 24 variables was also analyzed according to responses from the different jurisdictional categories (that is, by size). By looking for obvious differences (that is, greater than 0.5) between the means for each category and minimal standard deviation from that means, there was some indication that medium sized jurisdictions tended to record higher use of specific decision-making criteria: on average they indicated greater conflict over alternatives (M = 3.22); a greater incidence of serendipitous solutions (M= 2.83); and, more often stated their economic goals (M = 4.33). Medium sized jurisdictions recorded lower frequencies than the other two categories for "decisions were voted upon" (M = 3.16), and "decisions involved top management only" (M = 1.83).

As school jurisdictions increased in size, so did the average number of times that aspects of organizational culture were mentioned as part of the decision-making process (ranging from 3.28 for small jurisdictions to 4.00 for large). On average, small jurisdictions emphasized a concern for equity in the decision-making process more than medium and large jurisdictions (ranging from 3.82 for small jurisdictions to 3.00 for large jurisdictions), as well as much less (0.84 difference between means) emphasis on economic goals. These general observations were not subjected to further statistical analyses because of the previously noted non- representative nature of the respondent large jurisdictions (and their consequential minimal consideration in the preceding comments), and the vast difference between the numbers of small and medium jurisdictions involved in the study.

Related to strategies. A stepwise multiple regression analysis of the four decision-making factors yielded by factor analysis, the three decision-making models identified in Question 15 and the four categories of downsizing/budget reduction strategies from Question 7, yielded a correlation coefficient of 0.35 between Factor 1 (Outcomes) and the reduction of staff strategies in Question 7. That is, the decision-making characteristics which together constituted Factor 1 accounted for almost 12% of variance in the staff reduction strategies used by downsizing jurisdictions. Factor 1, together with the political decision-making sequence of activities (as described by option (3) in Question 15), accounted for over 18% of the variance in the staff reduction strategies used by those same jurisdictions. Several other less substantial correlations were revealed in the same analysis: Factor 2 (Process) was a significant predictor for the number of redeployment strategies used by downsizing jurisdictions, accounting for 7% of the variance; Factor 1 (Outcomes) correlated with the number of rationalization strategies used, accounting for 9% of the variance; and the same Factor 1 also accounted for 16% of the variance in downsizing jurisdictions' selection of strategies used to reduce direct spending.

In seeking to identify any further relationships which existed between decision-making processes and the downsizing/budget reduction strategies used by downsizing jurisdictions, the means and standard deviations of each strategy were calculated for each of the four factors and the 24 characteristics of the decision-making models. No substantial links were able to be established through such analysis, though a myriad of tenuous possibilities were originally identified. For example, respondents from jurisdictions which had elected to use natural attrition of specialist staff as a downsizing/budget restraint strategy also indicated higher incidence of conflict over alternatives, more "fluid participation", less involvement of top management, more mentions of aspects of organizational culture, more consideration of alternatives in a logical fashion, more mentions of "productivity", and more statements of economic goals as characteristics of the decision-making process over those which did not select this strategy. However, no distinctive patterns emerged from such analyses thereby inhibiting the correlation of decision-making processes with selection of strategies via this process.

Cross tabulations were used in seeking to establish the consistency of downsizing/budget reduction strategies chosen by jurisdictions (Question 7) with their decision-making processes and activities. Such analysis revealed that less than half of the respondents (32, or 45.1%) which had indicated their decision-making processes had involved a concern for efficiency had chosen to cut programs selectively. Even less of a relationship existed between concern for "equity" in the decision-making process and cutting programs across the board--only 4 (5.6%) of respondents indicated their jurisdictions had done both.

Correlations between each of the four factors and the individual decision-making models were also sought with jurisdiction's reported changes to their personnel practices/policies. Again, no substantial links were able to be established by comparing the means and standard deviations for the frequency with which jurisdictions had featured each of the decision-making characteristics and their choices to make more use of part-time staff, to require beginning teachers to have more than one area of specialization, or to increase the range of professional development programs available in the jurisdiction.

Comparison of CEO's choice of sequence of activities which best described her/his jurisdiction's decision-making processes (Question 15) was made with the extent to which jurisdictions featured the various characteristics of the decision-making models and the four factors derived from the factor analysis. Not surprisingly, jurisdictions selecting option (2) (or the administrative model) had a substantially higher (by at least 0.5) mean (3.58) linking them to Factor 3 (Authority) than either the rational (M = 3.04) or political (M = 3.00) model sequences. Otherwise, the only links that could be made were in relation to the individual decision-making characteristics, which in effect served to establish CEOs' consistency in responding to the various survey items exploring the decision-making models/typologies.

Related to contextual influences. A similar comparison of the four decision-making factors and individual decision-making characteristics with the prioritization of political/economic/legal issues' influence on downsizing/budget reduction strategies revealed no substantial differences between the decision-making processes of jurisdictions with differing perceptions of which issues were most influential.

Organizational context of decision making. Questions 17 - 26 of Part III of the questionnaire were directed at identifying some of the individual and organizational behaviors which formed the backdrop for decision making regarding downsizing. In seeking to identify if such decision making was done as an isolated activity or within the context of general administration, respondents were asked in Question 17 whether those decisions were part of the regular budgetary process. Sixty-six respondents of downsizing jurisdictions (or 93%) answered in the affirmative; only 5 respondents (or 7%) indicated otherwise.

Board members' perspective of downsizing/budget restraint was assessed by 28 (39.4%) of responding CEOs from downsizing jurisdictions to be a threat; 41 (57.7%) respondent CEOs indicated the majority of their board members considered it an opportunity; and two (2.8%) respondent CEOs suggested neither category, but did suggest their board members saw it as a need.

For 53 (74.6%) of the downsizing jurisdictions, the issue of downsizing was first raised within the administration, whereas 17 (23.9%) respondents recalled the issue as first being raised at a board meeting and/or by board members. The focus of the decision-making process for 39 (54.9%) respondents from downsizing jurisdictions had been on identifying a solution that had worked for them or someone else previously, with a further 29 (40.8%) of the respondents concentrating on finding a new solution.

One trustee's recollection of the first discussions her/his jurisdiction had on the issue of downsizing suggested the awareness of impending financial problems were highlighted by members of the business community at a board meeting. It was then up to the administration to come up with "one or two scenarios as solutions", and present a recommendation that the board then supported.

Participation in decision making. Because participation in the decision-making process can vary from formal, almost token consultation, to extensive collaboration, the next few questions on the survey instrument pursued possible ways in which various groups or individuals were involved. Seventy-two groups/individuals who sought formal involvement were named by 32 (45.7%) respondents from downsizing jurisdictions and were sorted into twenty-nine categories. Most frequent among these were: the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) (mentioned by 12 (37.5%) of the 32 respondents to this item); parents/parent councils (which combined drew 15 mentions or 46.9%); teachers (rating 7 mentions or 21.9%); principals and administrators were mentioned equally (by 6 respondents, or 18.8%, each). Others which received more than one mention were Early Childhood Services, other special interest groups, and staff--not specified. Of the up to four individuals/groups nominated by each of the aforementioned 32 respondents, acceptance of their requests to be involved in the decision making averaged 83.4%. The wide range of nominations (others not detailed above included such diverse interest groups as the Chamber of Commerce and the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)) reflected a concern by many CEOs for involvement of representatives from the wider school community and for the full range of stakeholders be involved in such decision-making activities. During interviews it was revealed one jurisdiction's commitment to extensive consultation and community participation was to convene a community forum:

> We are going to take, on a Friday evening and a Saturday, representatives from staff, parent groups, and the community, with a larger representation from the community and parent groups than from staff, to get input in terms of priorities for addressing the fiscal realities. So that's underway; that's been scheduled. We have a facilitator lined up to take people through a process or lead people through a process. And so that will give us, I guess, the community perspective. It will give our board the community perspective. Ultimately, of course, this group will not be making the decisions, but it'll be some valuable input, I think, into the whole process.
>
> And then of course in the new year, meetings are being scheduled with all staffs and all parent groups . . . in each of the schools, to share the realities and share information.

A trustee's perspective of the same activity emphasized the implicit request the school board was making to the community for support:

> It will involve many stakeholders. It will involve, I think, a hundred and fifteen people from the [city] area, and it will involve a lot of business people, a lot of supporters; we'll involve all the parent associations and some parents at large, so we'll try and get a lot of the key individuals in the community, members from the service groups and from the Chamber and just all walks of life, and try and get them all in to help us look at our big picture.

CEOs, in reacting to a survey question seeking their judgment of whether people perceived the various downsizing budget/reduction strategies chosen by their jurisdictions as being fair, without exception indicated that their board members had felt this way. Less positive (but still with considerably high frequencies) were their assessments that central office administrators of 94.4% of the downsizing jurisdictions had felt the strategies were fair, followed in turn by principals (93%), central office clerical staff (88.4%), and teachers (79.4%). One interviewee suggested that employees may well assess the "fairness" of the situation by whether they perceived the "school district [was] making an effort" to balance the needs of the school's educational program with employees' welfare and future career prospects, in addition to being "open and honest with us, because I think being honest with people would be the best policy."

CEOs' perceptions of the financial context of decision making. In the broader context, downsizing jurisdictions' CEOs were asked to indicate if they agreed that financial constraint in education was a problem for their jurisdiction. Remembering that answers to this question were given after jurisdictions were informed that grant moneys were to be frozen for 1993-94, but prior to the provincial government's announcement of a 20% cut to the education budget over the next three fiscal years (1994-95 to 1996-97) amounting to $369 million, 55 (78.6%) respondents answered in the affirmative. with 69 downsizing jurisdictions (98.6%) acknowledging that such constraint was likely to last for at least another two to three years. A minority of respondents (25, or 37.9%) believed that their financial problems could only be resolved by gaining more government funding. For at least one respondent in particular, true "equity funding" was required to resolve her/his jurisdiction's financial straits.

Perhaps one senior administrator could even be accused of "insider trading" when her/his comments made during an interview held some considerable time prior to the January 1994 government's announcement of dramatic changes to the governance of education in the province during the upcoming year were:

> Of course, we're talking a far different magnitude as well, a far different magnitude, and in fact that's something really that is centrally driven. What has occurred before was really what was necessary to retain a balanced budget with all the existing rules in place, if you wish. Now all the rules are changing, and some major impacts are happening relative to funding in education, so it's a far different situation.

In further pursuit of respondents' perceptions and feelings of the financial situation, they were asked to assess the morale of the employees in their jurisdictions which were downsizing. On a five point scale where 1 = "very low" and 5 = "very high", the majority (36 respondents, or 51.4%) selected point (4) with the remaining 46 respondents split between (3)--35.7%, (2)--10%, and (5)--2.9%. In being asked to indicate if they were surprised at the level of morale in their own jurisdiction, 63 (or 92.3%) of the respondents indicated they were not, mainly because of various organization traits such as: good communication lines; an emphasis on teamwork and/or maintaining a good culture/climate (most often cited); the maintenance of good working conditions; employees having reduced expectations in the current economy; an awareness that policies and decisions have been based on logic and relatively free from politics; a shared vision and acceptance of the need to downsize; and the level of participation in decision making. Such comments made in response to the questionnaire were reinforced by interviewees from different jurisdictions:

> We've traditionally had a really good relationship between teachers and trustees in this system, and I think that's been working to the system's advantage, because if the relationship had been strained in any way--for example, if there had been strikes in the past--there may be a totally different perception.

and,

> we have a good rapport with our teachers out here, and our negotiations have been fairly decent, but we've always given some dollars.

While most of these reasons supported the CEO's selection of medium to high morale, those CEOs who indicated the lower levels of morale as not surprising cited such reasons as: collective agreements awaiting resolution; increased expectations of parents coinciding with limitation of resources; the aftermath of industrial disputes or significant restructuring; the attitude of the board towards teaching staff; job uncertainty; and the influence of the ATA.

Decision motives. In addition to the earlier occasion provided in the questionnaire for CEOs to comment on their perceptions of whether board members saw financial constraint as a threat or an opportunity, CEOs were asked to answer the same question on their own behalf in Question 26. Nineteen (26.7%) CEOs of downsizing jurisdictions indicated they thought financial constraint was more a threat than an opportunity, with 50 (70.4%) of their colleagues indicating the reverse. An invitation to the respondents to indicate why they thought the way they did elicited a variety of comments from some of the 35 respondents who explained their feelings.

On the aspect of financial restraint being a threat, a number of remarks indicated respondents may have felt lack of control: it is "mindless, purposeless situations imposed on the organization"; diminishing services were seen as necessarily impacting students; management flexibility was assumed to be limited; and financial cutbacks were seen by necessity to raise the pupil:teacher ratio. (Although, as one interviewee, a principal of a newly constructed school, observed, "the classrooms themselves, architecturally, physically, are smaller, so if we downsize and put more children in the rooms, . . . you can't even get around the room because there's so many children.") Several CEOs also remarked that they were already operating at such "a level that leaves little room for further cutbacks."

On the aspect of financial restraint being perceived as an opportunity, the financial imperative was seen primarily as a catalyst for change: an opportunity to reexamine what jurisdictions "do". As explained by one respondent: "we all add fat in the good times. This is an opportunity to review what is really necessary." Other specific comments indicated financial constraint was seen as "leading to innovation to survive", providing the impetus for "jurisdictions to reevaluate their mission/purpose and practices", providing a mandate for proactive approaches to educational change for the benefit of students, and highlighting a requirement for more accountability to the public (including industry). Several respondents reserved the right to change their minds (from perceived opportunities to perceived threats) in the future should the financial cuts continue; one CEO noted s/he had "passed the 'opportunity stage' and [was] now in the 'threat stage'."

A cross tabulation of CEOs' perceptions of their board members' decision motives and their own indicated that 46 (75.4%, n = 61) respondents saw their decision motives as congruent: 13 (21.3%) regarded the situation as seen to be threatening by both; 33 (54.1%) regarded the situation as seen to constitute an opportunity by both. A quarter of the CEOs who regarded the situation as an opportunity suggest that it was seen as a threat by their board members.

Related to contextual influences. A further cross tabulation of CEOs' decision motives and their indication of what types of issues (political, economic, legal) they saw to be most influential in deciding upon their strategies for responding to financial constraint (as identified in Question 12) revealed that none of those who considered the situation a threat considered political issues as most influential. Not surprisingly, 64% of the "threatened" CEOs indicated economic, political, and legal issues as being influential in that order. While that same combination of priorities was also the most popular (40.5%) for the 42 CEOs who saw the situation as an opportunity, the second most popular combination was economic, legal and political (28.6%) with political, economic, and then legal being third (with 21.4%) for the "opportunity" group.

Related to participation in decision making. Cross tabulations were also used to identify any patterns between CEOs' decision motives and the people who were formally involved in the decision-making process. For CEOs who saw the situation as a threat, 23.5% chose to involve only board members whereas this deselection of other participants was only made by 4.2% of CEOs who saw the situation as an opportunity. Otherwise, particular combinations of participants did not reveal any frequencies which warranted pursuing.

Related to decision-making processes. Analysis of the correlation (using cross tabulation) between CEO's decision motives and their jurisdiction's decision-making processes (as described in response to Question 15) yielded only one frequency which differed from the overall pattern of responses: a higher proportion (25.0%) of "threatened" CEOs identified option (2) (the "administrative" sequence) as the best description of decision-making activities in their jurisdiction for determining restructuring/downsizing strategies--an additional 8.1% to the overall response for that option.

Further exploration for possible correlations between decision motives and decision-making processes was pursued by calculating the means and the standard deviations for the frequencies with which CEOs who identified financial constraint as either a "threat" or an "opportunity" identified the various characteristics/criteria of the decision-making models/typologies in Question 16. When the characteristics were factored together as per the previously reported factor analysis, substantial differences (that is, 0.5 or more between the means) were noted for Factor 3; that is, the CEOs who identified themselves as threatened by financial constraint more often ($M = 3.50$) featured characteristics associated with "authoritative" decision-making processes than those who were not threatened ($M = 3.00$). Individually analyzed, there was no distinctive pattern of relationships between CEOs' decision motives and specific decision-making characteristics.

Monitoring the results of the decision making. While it was recognized that at the time of the survey many of Alberta's school jurisdictions were only just beginning to feel the impact of the new wave of financial constraint and may have been unable to comment on whether their downsizing/budget restraint strategies were actually achieving the jurisdictions' financial and/or structural goals, ways and means of monitoring progress towards their goals and/or reviewing their strategies were sought in an open-ended question. Many of the resultant comments defied categorization into a small number of themes. However, of the 58 CEOs who did respond to this item, 12 (or 20.7%) described various types of regular budgetary reviews. Listening to key people (for informal feedback, it seemed), monitoring of morale, questionnaires, academic performance, specially convened committees, personnel reports, and generally looking for changes in operational effectiveness featured among other proposed monitoring devices.

Administrative/management decisions. Remarks offered by 26 respondents in the nature of "any other comments [they wished to make] about administrative/management adjustments [their] school jurisdiction [had] made in response to financial constraint" as a conclusion to this section of the survey instrument were taken to be a real indication of the concern for the topic of the study and the time CEOs were willing to invest in its exploration. The focus of many of the comments were details of specific budgetary cuts made by the various jurisdictions and a pervasive sentiment of trying to make the best of a bad situation by seizing what opportunities lay therein.

For many CEOs, financial constraint seemed to have heightened the imperative to look for more efficient ways of fulfilling their educational charter. For others, the perceived adverse effects of economics and politics combining to dictate the educational program had obviously provoked some ideological, pedagogical, and administrative frustrations--frustrations, which were initially with the budgetary actions they felt they were forced to take, appeared to be refocussed over time on the forces they felt had caused financial constraint. At public meetings and in newspaper editorials, anger with the situation was directed to previous investment risks the provincial government had misjudged to the detriment of the province's solvency. The words of the disenchanted survey respondents--"trustees decided to. . . cut programs . . . without too much thought to the consequences", and "Our board is more concerned with the Economics and Politics of downsizing than what is educationally sound!" were in stark contrast to those of the optimists--"strong team spirit has developed as [the staff] have grappled with the problem of getting most for least", and "[our jurisdiction] initiated major local jurisdictions' cooperative planning-action-ventures discussions to identify and manage action to reduce expenditures (includes major local corporate ratepayers) . . . a unique cooperative approach".

Two CEOs, in forwarding budget background papers to the researcher, highlighted their (and many of their colleagues') anticipation of a worsening financial situation for their school jurisdictions. One document in particular, a five year operational plan for the jurisdiction detailing projected income and expenditures until 1998, was not only planning for a decreasing budget over that time but also the reduction of the jurisdiction's debt servicing costs by $3 million concomitant with building up a contingency fund. The other document was a detailed schedule of expenditure cuts highlighting implications for each program--a document that were it circulated (it is not known if this was so) it would illustrate what appeared to be a methodical review of the jurisdiction's educational priorities and serve to inform the entire school community of just where cuts had been, or were intended to be, made.

Criticisms made during the post-survey interviews exemplified the differing perceptions and/or lack of information even supposedly quite well-informed people held about the actual impact of financial constraint within their organization. Acknowledgment of this situation is best illustrated by one teacher's own words:

> In the perception of most teachers, . . . there's still a perception that our district office is overstaffed . . . because people are living on the reality of the last three and four years, and most teachers have very little direct access or dealings here with our district office, when in reality they have really cut down in terms of their employment staff. . . . So there have definitely been downsizing efforts here, but most teachers don't recognize it.

A senior administrator in the jurisdiction saw the same situation a little differently:

> There was an awareness of the reality. I mean, there was enough information, and people were not kept in the dark at all. We did have alerts to staff and information to staff in terms of what some of the realities were. We did alert that certain things had to occur in order to reach a balanced budget and so on. [But there were] a couple of people who were literally shocked when they started to look at, I guess, the effect.

Personal Perceptions of CEOs about Decision Making in Response to Financial Constraint

Involvement in the Process

As opposed to the previous parts of the questionnaire which sought details of what had occurred in the various school jurisdictions, Part IV of the survey instrument attempted to differentiate between what did happen and what CEOs thought should have happened (or should happen in the future), especially in regard to participation of groups/individuals in the decision-making process relating to downsizing/budget reductions. Respondents were asked to indicate on a scale of (1) = "not at all" to (5) = "exclusively" who should be involved. Table 4.15 records respondents' reactions ranked by order of means.

The results convey a belief on the part of CEOs in a certain "hierarchy" of involvement, with less value apparently placed on participation the further from the centralized administration the potential participants are located; on this basis, external consultants seem destined only for minimal input. Almost equal value is placed on the involvement of the CEO and the board with expert employees not appearing to have been assigned any special status for their specialized knowledge/skills. Of the "others" specified by 50 respondents, staff and community groups were the most frequently mentioned (by 30% and 28% respectively). The inclusion of some community groups (such as the Chamber of Commerce) may be either political and/or courteous--as noted by one respondent who openly resented the need to involve them: "they are typically 'NIMBY' in their thinking." Multiple mentions were made also of parents, teachers, parent councils and/or other parent groups, principals, and senior administrators. The most additional categories of individuals or groups added by any one respondent was five.

Table 4.15

Rank Ordering of CEOs' Recommendations for Involvement of Groups/Individuals in Decision Making

Groups/Individuals	Extent of Involvement Not at all 1	2	3	4	Exclusively 5	n	Mean	SD	Rank Order
3) The CEO	-	-	6	51	9	66	4.05	0.48	1.5
4) The board	-	2	1	55	8	66	4.05	0.51	1.5
1) A small group of expert/key employees	1	5	15	41	4	66	3.64	0.78	3
5) Others including: principals, union leaders and representatives, parent councils/groups, community groups, support staff, senior administrators, students, ratepayers, people in affected programs, and various combinations of the preceding	-	4	18	23	4	49	3.55	0.77	4
2) External consultants	16	29	11	7	-	63	2.14	0.93	5

Strategic Planning

Respondents were also asked to reveal their beliefs on the role of formal strategic plans in dealing with such issues as downsizing. Fifty-five respondents (79.7%) of downsizing jurisdictions indicated a belief that not only did such plans assist by helping to maintain a focus on priorities, but also that the processes involved in strategic planning ensured that it was representative of key players' opinions and procured their commitment to its goals. Additionally it was seen to be beneficial because it required "foresight and collaboration" and reduced "the perception of bias or politicking" in the decision-making process. One jurisdiction visited by the researcher to conduct interviews was particularly committed to the necessity and benefits of strategic planning. Several statements by an administrator, though made when discussing a variety of administrative concerns, revealed strategic planning as the very core of the district's educational programs and management processes:

> Our cuts are strategic, and based on our educational mission. So our view is that our educational priorities, our goals, and objectives related to those, are what drives our budgeting process, our financial situation. Our financial situation is more of a restructuring [than downsizing]. I mean, it is a downsizing, but with the downsizing it's restructuring, and it's clearly focused on our priorities, our educational priorities. . . .[It is a formal plan] and it's reviewed quarterly. . . . It's basically the board's strategic plan developed by all the stakeholders.

Restated by a school principal from the same district, "the strategic plan is something we have continued to focus on, it's not another bandwagon."

From the opposite perspective, those who denied it had benefits were skeptical of strategic planning's usefulness when the "lack of government funding beyond current year detracts from feasibility of long term planning" and generally subscribed to the concept that "circumstances change too quickly in these economic times", "external pressure is too fluid and unpredictable, we have to be 'fast on our feet!' " Other adversaries declared that strategic planning "is current conservative thinking", that it is just "primarily an exercise in public relations . . . [it] affords school jurisdictions an air of corporate slickness (i.e.. we can pretend that we are on a par with all those hugely successful corporations such as General Motors, IBM, etc.", and that "it places constraints on decision making." The originators of all the preceding comments are profiled in the next section.

Personal Details of Respondents

Part V of the questionnaire was designed to discover the personal attributes, experience as a CEO, and educational background of the respondents from downsizing jurisdictions, details of which are presented in Tables 4.16 to 4.18. The data recorded in Table 4.16 show that male CEOs outnumbered female CEOs in the ratio of almost 23:1 (68 males and 3 females). CEOs were also most often in the 50 - 54 age range (48%), although many were in the next younger age group.

Table 4.16

Personal Characteristics of CEOs of Downsizing Jurisdictions

Personal Characteristic	f	%f	Cum %f
Gender (n = 71)			
Female	3	4.2	4.2
Male	68	95.8	100
Age (n = 64)			
Younger than 40	2	3.1	3.1
40 - 44	8	12.5	15.6
45 - 49	13	20.3	35.9
50 - 54	30	46.9	82.8
55 - 59	7	10.9	93.7
60 or older	4	6.5	100
Mean = 51; mode = 53			

Educational Background

Table 4.17 reveals the scope of academic qualifications held by the respondents. Fifty-one (or 71.8%) of respondents (n = 71) indicated their highest academic qualification was at the master's level with just three (4.2%) having either a bachelor's degree or an undergraduate diploma/certificate only.

Table 4.17

Educational Background of CEOs of Downsizing Jurisdictions
(n = 71)

Highest Qualification	f	%f
Baccalaureate degree	3	4.2
Masters degree	51	71.8
Doctorate degree	17	23.9

Related to decision making. Relationships between respondents' highest level of education and their jurisdiction's decision-making processes were explored by establishing the mean and the standard deviations for each of three categories (those with baccalaureates or diplomas/certificates, those with masters, and those with doctorates, as their highest qualification) in respect of the frequency with which the four factors and the 24 individual characteristics of decision-making models were selected in their responses to Question 16. The following comments are based on any substantial (that is, exceeding 0.5) differences in the means between the groups.

Respondents with masters degrees as their highest qualification recorded the highest incidence (M = 3.78) of Factors 1 (Outcomes) and 3 (Authority) in their decision making. The same group also weighed costs and benefits against each other more often, made more mention of organizational culture, more often considered alternatives in a logical sequence, more often compared alternatives to each other, were more influenced by senior officers with specialized knowledge/expertise of personnel and/or finance, made more mentions of "efficiency", "productivity", "educational values", and protecting employee morale, stated economic goals more often, and least often arrived at decisions by consensus than the other two groups in their decision making.

Respondents with doctoral degrees showed the highest incidence of bargaining to arrive at solutions, a greater propensity for top management only to be involved in decisions, least mentions of "productivity", most mentions of "equity" as features of the decision-making process in their jurisdiction; but for most of the decision-making characteristics they indicated just slightly lower means than those of respondents with masters degrees as their highest qualification. Due to the very small number of respondents with baccalaureates as their highest qualification ($n = 3$) this "group" cannot be compared to the others with any degree of confidence. However, there was an indication by this group to have a greater propensity for featuring voting upon decisions in their jurisdiction's decision-making processes.

Professional Experience

At the time of the study many of the respondents had occupied the position as CEO of a school jurisdiction for some time with only 16 (22.9%) having been CEOs for two years or less. A more detailed breakdown is provided in Table 4.18.

While respondents had been CEOs for an average of 8.5 years (median = 6.5 years), on average they had been in their current positions for 6.6 years. On the estimation of the periods of school decline (as defined in Chapter 1) being 1978-85, 18 of the 68 respondents (26.5%) to this question were also CEOs of the same jurisdiction when cutbacks were experienced due to declining enrollments. The potential impact of their experiences from that time were identified by an interviewee who described the approach taken by her/his CEO in the district's more recent cutbacks as completely different to the earlier experiences which had been acknowledged as somewhat of a disaster:

Table 4.18

Experience of CEOs of Downsizing Jurisdictions

Number of Years	f	%f
As CEO (n = 70)		
5 or less	29	41.4
6 - 10	19	27.2
11 - 15	13	18.6
16 or more	9	12.7
In Current Position (n = 68)		
2 years or less	17	30.9
5 years or less	38	55.9
10 years or less	53	77.0

> We went through a downsizing then. The way it was handled at that time was that a general meeting was called . . . by the superintendent, of all the teachers in the school system . . . and it was, "Sorry, there's going to be thirty of you not here next year, and we don't know what thirty of you it's going to be." . . . You just sort of sat there in stunned silence, wondering who was going to go, and I don't think that was good for the school system. It was good for telling everybody the same message at the same time, but all of a sudden everybody was on pins and needles as to who was going to go. . . . So those staff members who have been here more than ten years would probably remember this, but the ones ten years or less wouldn't.

> I think it was recognized at the time that way didn't work too well, and if we have to go through it again, we have to do it a different way . . . with our collaborative structure we're setting up.

An administrator from another jurisdiction placed a different perspective on that experience:

> Although we had declining enrollments, we had probably just as much, or very slightly less, resources in order to work with these declining enrollments, and so . . . I guess the problem wasn't as severe, and maybe that's what has gotten the province into the debt that it has. Maybe we didn't deal with it in the early 'eighties and should have dealt with saving more money at that stage when the resources were abundant. And now when we're in a crunch, it's put a lot of hardship on a lot of people, and will for the next three to five years, I would think.
>
> You certainly gain; this has been my experience. You gain from your experiences, and so each and every time you have to undertake something which is fairly foreign, the next time you do it you are fairly confident that you can do a better job of it, because you tend to learn from your mistakes.

Another administrator in the same jurisdiction doubted that the previous experience was beneficial in the more recent cutbacks: "I don't think there was any comparison between the scenario back in those days and today."

Related to decision making. Cross tabulations of the decision-making typologies in Question 15 with respondents' years of experience as CEOs and tenure of their current positions only served to confirm the selection of the decision-making processes was in the same proportions as respondents' experience and tenure. However, it was noted that the one CEO who identified "issue identification > conflict bargaining" as the jurisdiction's predominant process was a CEO with more than 10 years experience in her/his current position.

Analysis of respondents' years of experience as CEO and tenure of their current position in relation to the decision-making factors identified by factor analysis in Question 16 and each of the 24 variables in the same question yielded no substantial correlations.

Summative Comments on Downsizing/Budget Reduction by Study Participants

The last section of the survey, Part VI, was directed to all respondents (n = 120), not just those of downsizing jurisdictions, to obtain total budget figures for 1992-93 and 1993-94 from each school jurisdiction.

Budgets

The budgetary figures obtained from CEOs' responses varied somewhat from the figures provided by Alberta Education for the same jurisdictions. Table 4.19 presents a comparison of these figures as a prelude to further analysis or comment.

Table 4.19

School Jurisdictions' Total Budget (Expenditure) Figures for 1992-93 and 1993-94

Budget Data Source	Minimum $M	Maximum $M	Mean $M	Median $M	Sum $M
			1992-93		
Survey	0.155	164.933	15.769	9.551	1766.090
Alberta Education	0.124	166.188	15.165	8.765	1819.818
Variance of Survey to Alta Ed	0.031	-1.255	0.604	0.786	-53.728
			1993-94		
Survey	0.125	174.017	16.085	9.711	1785.420
Alberta Education*	0.120	174.744	15.833	9.628	1868.340
Variance of Survey to Alta Ed	0.005	-0.727	0.252	0.083	-82.920

Note: *figures unavailable for two jurisdictions.

On average, respondent jurisdictions reported higher annual budgetary figures than those provided by Alberta Education. To identify specific variations, comparisons were made between the two sources of data for each of the 120 respondent jurisdictions. Twenty-six respondents (or 23.2%) provided exactly the same figures as Alberta Education for 1992-93 and 30 respondents (27.8%) provided exactly the same figures as Alberta Education for 1993-94. All but 22 of the respondents were within 5% of Alberta Education figures for 1992-93 and all but 17 within 5% of Alberta Education figures for 1993-94.

Of particular concern were variations of more than 25% between the data sources: for 1992-93 one jurisdiction reported 76% smaller budget than reported by Alberta Education, and another 49% less; two other jurisdictions reported jurisdictional expenditure exceeding Alberta Education's figures by 322% and 102%.

Planned budgets (agreed expenditure between Alberta Education and the jurisdiction) for 1993-94 showed a little less disparity between the two sources of data: again, two jurisdictions reported 75% and 31% larger budgets and two others 316% and 47% less than Alberta Education's figures. All the noted variations occurred within small jurisdictions; no medium jurisdiction reported more than a 5.7% variation either way; and large jurisdictions were within 1% variation. The extreme variations either way were reported for separate jurisdictions but with the same CEO. In checking the source data it was revealed that the figures had been transposed on the questionnaires but were each in fact accurate for the other jurisdiction. The other anomalies were generally restricted to jurisdictions with one school and reported variations between the number of resident students and enrollments; where the percentages did not account for large monetary amounts and could easily be accounted for by transfer payments from other jurisdictions for enrollment of non-resident students.

Many CEOs expressed concern that the difference between their jurisdiction's 1992-93 and 1993-94 budget figures did not reflect their jurisdiction's "true" financial situation. Qualifying statements by respondents included:

> This [increase of less than $70 000] is in part misleading because it includes increased provincial revenue and local expenditure for a debenture taken on a modernization of a school facility;

and

> The difference between the two budgets alone [a decrease of just over $34 000 in a very small jurisdiction] does not indicate the extent of downsizing.

Other respondent concerns expressed in concert with the provision of the budgetary figures included explanations of why respondents considered they were in a downsizing mode or reducing per pupil expenditure when their budgets may not necessarily have conveyed a need for financial constraint. For example:

> We reduced expenditures in a number of areas while other areas such as salaries increased. One canceled the other except for the equity grant.

Another comment reflected several respondents' expressed perception that provincial funding of education had been somewhat of a gamble for 1993-94:

> The board committed early to 'no increase in local taxes'. This combined with reduced provincial funding resulted in the need to cut 1.2 million dollars from the budget. Only the special lottery funding permitted the District to reduce the size of the cuts.

This was not a singular case of expressed frustration based on the fiscal uncertainty experienced by Alberta school jurisdictions.

> We did get some last-minute cuts [to grants] that we weren't expecting . . . last year. The morning that we were to finalize our budget, the information came in, so you can understand what it did to that: It just threw it all back in the pot, and we actually extended our budget discussions by another eight days.

Conclusion

Opportunity was also provided for respondents to the survey, whether from downsizing jurisdictions or not, to proffer remarks and/or information on any aspect of the study topic which they felt was important. While there was a wide range of ideas, there was little consensus on ways to manage financial constraint. Not least of the sentiments encapsulated in the five lines provided for comment was the oft expressed need felt by jurisdictions for provincial funding to be provided on a three to five year basis, as opposed to the practice of annual funding. One modest request was for "Government announcements . . . to be made more in advance of our budget timelines of today; maybe as much as 1-2 years ahead of time so we can assess needs versus wants versus wishes." Stronger sentiments were more prevalent: there is "need for 3 year government funding plan immediately." In particular, there appeared to be some resentment of the delayed announcement (made in May 1993 instead of January 1993) of the provincial education budget for 1993-94.

One CEO summarized several of her/his colleagues' belief that any future cuts (1994-95 onwards) would affect the very essence of the provincial education system:

> If there is a continued decline in government financial support we need to see changes in structures--alter school year, review teacher certificate requirements for some areas, with provincial leadership in redefining public education.

This recognition of the need for fundamental change, in particular administrative restructuring, was endorsed by comments from several other CEOs. For example:

> Very few systems in North America have 'restructured.' They have reduced or downsized and done the same with less or taken measures which provide short term gain and long term pain. e.g. eliminate maintenance.

Although one CEO indicated her/his jurisdiction had implemented considerable changes already:

> We began restructuring in 1989 with the development of a strategic plan. Since then we have focused on priorities and have increased the efficiency of several departments. We now spend more money on instruction. We have revised staffing formulas and decentralized school budget formulas etc.

More philosophical observations of the financial situation included general comments about the decision-making processes during times of fiscal constraint:

> These are not easy times. It is essential for CEOs and boards to consult with as many staff as possible in developing plans for restructuring/downsizing/budget reduction, so that the staff feels part of the process, rather than victims of planning decisions.
>
> It is easier to open a branch of the bank than to close one.
> There is no surplus to buy consensus.

For some CEOs, the demoralizing impact of financial constraint was overwhelming:

> The mood created by some educational (politically motivated) leaders has demoralized our school systems.
>
> I've had [a very large number] happy years in this district. This past year has been a nightmare. Although my colleagues and I were quite proud of the quality of education in this district some new trustees vowed to 'turn the district upside down.' The resulting financial crisis may destroy this jurisdiction as we know it.
>
> We cannot continue to downsize forever!

An alternative perspective was offered from a non-downsizing jurisdiction:

> We should always operate a school system with sound fiscal policies in place instead of making downsizing a major event.

Despite a request to do otherwise, of the 49 respondents to the survey who in the initial questionnaire items indicated they were neither downsizing nor reducing their expenditure per student, nine non-downsizing jurisdiction CEOs chose to complete Parts II to V of the questionnaire. While their responses were not included in the statistical analyses for those sections, their responses did indicate that they were expending considerable effort in planning for financial restraint and participating in administrative practices associated with cutback management--the better to prepare themselves for the eventuality of the need to downsize/reduce expenditure per student. One such CEO commented that: "The district is positioning ourselves to massive changes in 2-3 years" and was therefore reviewing several downsizing strategies, especially the closure of schools.

Such long-term planning appeared to have served one particular jurisdiction, whose personnel participated in the post-survey interviews, well. Were they teacher, principal, trustee or administrator, interviewees from that district credited the CEO with proactive leadership skills and management integrity that had ensured the jurisdiction could not only financially survive but pursue a student-centered educational program despite provincial government cuts to funding.

Issues Identified in Post-Survey Interviews

Of the 120 respondents, 33 (27.5%) indicated a willingness to be involved in the follow-up interviews to the survey, many nominating personnel from their jurisdictions whom they considered informed on the study topic itself and/or associated events in their jurisdiction. From those interviews, several issues emerged which had not been addressed in the composition of the survey questionnaire.

Communicating the Strategies

Many of the comments made by interviewees in relation to participation in the decision-making processes regarding downsizing also revealed an underlying theme of "communication concerns." This aspect of the downsizing process was alluded to earlier in this chapter when selected quotations from the transcript of an interviewee who identified some of the "lessons" learnt by administrators from their previous experiences of downsizing were presented (on page 150). As if to emphasize the importance of this aspect to the whole process of responding to financial constraint, the same teacher returned to discussing aspects of informing staff of "the situation" in other segments of the conversation:

> I think the earlier the better, because that way people can prepare themselves mentally for these sorts of things. But I know one of the concerns in the school system would be, if you tell some of these people too soon in terms of the school year--let's say you tell people in January, "Sorry, you're not going to have a job"--their job performance may go down. So there's probably a delicate balance in there in terms of when you let people know. . . .
>
> I think if it was announced early that at the high school, because of the needs of the programs, we're going to be keeping everybody, it would alleviate people at the high school. But for those who teach elementary school . . . it's going to scare heck out of them. So you can help one group but at the same time hurt another, and I don't know how to solve the problem.

The senior administrator with responsibility for human resource management in the same jurisdiction agreed:

> You have to share all the information. You can empathize and so on, but you have to be honest, and you have to tell them the full story and so on and so forth. . . .
>
> Ultimately, I think you have to deal with people in a reasonable and understanding way, but you really have to be honest with them, and you can't give mixed messages, and they have to understand what the reasons are[for the cutbacks] and you have to give them some appreciation or some understanding of that.
>
> I might say one thing, you might start the process a little earlier, but I'm not convinced that that's really feasible or wise. I mean in terms of alerting people and so on. I don't know if I could say--or if it's just kind of thinking out loud and saying, "Look, is there a better time?" I guess I'm not sure, I'm not sure.

Improved communication with the wider community was also identified by a trustee as an essential component in enabling the jurisdiction to manage downsizing effectively when s/he related problems experienced by colleagues in the past year:

> Last year we didn't realize [a big company in the area] was laying off so many people. Unfortunately, there wasn't any communication between them and our administration, and that really impacted us heavily. Some families moved out, so that impacted the schools, but there was also a lot more unemployment and instability in the town, and it just rippled [through the system] because families weren't secure. I think it also helped drive home the reality of the recession.

However, steps had been taken to redress that situation at the time of this study:

> For the past year we've had ongoing meetings with the major stakeholders in town where we have the city and the hospital board and the college, the two school districts, and we have [two large companies], and the [Improvement District].

The same person also highlighted concerns with the manner in which the jurisdiction's employees came by their information relating to the administration's budget reduction decisions and strategies:

> I really think things should be done in collaboration, and I really, really, really believe in talking with our employees first. We had a question I've been asked by the media a lot, and I said, "You know, there's just nothing I would discuss without talking to our employees first." When people don't know what's happening, I think it's worse than when you involve everyone, and they can see it themselves, that tough decisions are going to have to be made, and I think then they respect you for it when you meet with them.

A principal concerned with keeping her/his staff informed of decisions being made at the district level and also within the school indicated the complexity of the situation following a district principals' meeting to discuss reactions to financial constraint:

> We [feel we're not] operating from a strong information base. We had [indications] of, "This is how the end is going to look," but it wasn't clear how we were going to get there, and we were being asked to provide feedback or information . . . We don't have a whole picture of anything. We have this one little bit of information: we know the provincial grant. We don't know what our local response is going to be; we don't know what our parents are willing to do.

The same school principal had taken to heart the need to pass on what information was available to her/him to the school staff, but with the proviso that the information would not create more frustration than necessary for those people:

> I try to provide as much information as I can to the whole staff, but I try not to do it before I have adequate information. As little bits are coming in, I think giving that out would only cause fear, whereas once there is enough [information] that we can do an analysis and we have something to grapple with, then I tend to make sure everybody has the same information. Either prior to that information going out or immediately after, I individually see those that I see it impacting to the greatest degree. For example, within our classified staff, I know one area of

> expertise next year, that job is eliminated. Well, that person will have that information before it goes to the whole crowd, just so that they're not put in a position of being shocked, not emotionally prepared to deal with it, so that they are prepared for questions that may come from their colleagues.

Throughout the interviews, "honesty" and "fairness" were the recurrent criteria for communicating with staff, expressed by trustees, senior administrators, teachers, and other employees alike.

Identifying Alternative Strategies

Efforts among employee groups had not seemed to identify any innovative strategies for dealing with financial constraint in their jurisdictions, yet they were obviously desirous of doing so:

> We have discussed things like four-day work weeks, and most of the teachers are very much in favor of that. . . . A number of years ago we did look at increasing the length of our school days so that we could get one Friday off a month, and the reason why it didn't work [then] was because parents 'phoned and complained and said, "That means we're going to have to hire baby-sitters" and these other things.
>
> Because the School Act determines how many hours of instruction students have, currently we're required to use our entire hundred and ninety days to get in the required hours of instruction, so if they wanted to do that, they would have to change the School Act. I can't see them reducing the hours of instruction because there is a perception out there that our kids aren't in school enough as it is. . . . If anything in the province, there's probably pressure for longer school days and a longer school year.

Above all, there was a pervading theme that cuts of any nature must be "furthest from the students" or "outside the classroom", and an apparent pride by people from jurisdictions who felt they had been able to do that.

An awareness of a need for alternative solutions to budget reductions was obvious in talking to trustees. One trustee had taken feedback from the manner in which other organizations in the town had handled cutbacks as an indicator of a requirement for "new solutions":

> In talking with the way some other organizations in town handle some of their fiscal problems, they just impose them on their employees, and their employees have been talking with me and saying they would have much rather done things in a different manner, such as cutting their own hours or taking a decrease in pay so that not many people lost their jobs. And others have even suggested more job sharing. And I'm certainly open to any of those if the staff finds that they would be more palatable than other things.

Other strategies under discussion in the same jurisdiction included sharing costs within the community among other government services (such as the library services), the large corporations, and the other school district, especially in relation to such functions as transportation, bulk purchasing of stationary, and maintenance contracts. The emphasis of the proposals was very much on cooperation for "generic" services rather than amalgamation, or undertaking a number of services on a cost-sharing basis with neighboring jurisdictions.

It was also a trustee who proffered the previously mentioned proposal for rationalization of government services at the local level (see page 105) and seeking alternative modes of cooperation for all aspects of operations.

Doing More (or at Least the Same) with Less

Another recurring theme throughout the interviews was the recognition by a variety of personnel of the impact staff reductions had on those remaining in the organization--especially if the remaining employees were still expected to, and/or attempted to, maintain or even expand educational programs and services. To one consultant such demands represented a challenge:

> This is the largest challenge for us right now, and I can speak personally because it's incredible the amount that we are still trying to maintain with fewer people. Now, in terms of our office here again, large cuts in terms of support staff--secretarial, clerical, etc.--we also saw a great reduction in the number of consultants, and subsequently, our roles have really expanded . . . in a sense, we have become really efficient. We have become, I think, more effective probably than when there were twelve or fifteen consultants because our work is so clearly focused and so coherent. . . . There's been some real benefits, and we are strong; we're a strong team. I would say there's not one individual on the team

> who is ineffective; we're not carrying anyone. It's very powerful, I think.

Despite the optimism, further into the conversation and following agreement that possibly the cuts that had been made at the central office had not been acknowledged by the wider school district community, a chink in the positive perspective appeared:

> In the long run, we're going to start cracking at the seams because there's only so much we can do. We're going to start falling apart because every one of us is working probably sixty- to seventy-hour weeks. We can't maintain it. I know I personally can maintain it, but--.

To a custodian in the same jurisdiction it was simply a matter of recognizing that everybody was doing "a lot more for the buck now."

Trustees were not unaware of this dilemma and one indicated strong concerns about "staff burnout":

> I'm really cautious right now, because I see fewer people doing the same thing. . . . I haven't noticed a decrease in the amount of work we've done over the past year, even though we downsized, and that really concerns me, and that's something I'm really watching this year, because there's fewer bodies doing the same amount of work, and I don't know if that's always good.
>
> We're carefully monitoring the situation, and one thing we have discussed is the fact that when we take something on, what are we going to drop? Because there's just too much coming at us and all of it is critical, so I think each time we're examining, what can we lessen? But so far I haven't seen us dropping too much, and that concerns me.

Summary

Arising out of the various statistical analyses of data gathered by questionnaires sent to CEOs of school jurisdictions throughout Alberta, it has been possible to establish that at least half of those jurisdictions have been involved in downsizing/budget reduction activities over the past twelve months in response to perceived financial imperatives imposed through government funding of education. While the extent of such activities varied widely, frequencies of responses to the survey items were used to identify the various decision-making processes involved in determining individual jurisdictions' rejoinders to financial constraint and their use of a range of options from the wider repertoire of cutback management strategies.

Closer examination of responses by cross tabulations, factor analysis, and multiple regression analysis helped to identify certain relationships between selected variables identified in the conceptual framework of the study, in particular if and/or how the contextual elements of extra organizational influences, intra organizational features and professional attributes of the CEO were related either directly or indirectly via the decision-making process, to various downsizing/budget reduction strategies.

Data gleaned through interviews of personnel from two of those jurisdictions tended to support and enhance the data yielded by the survey. The interviews also provided a strong indication to the researcher that perceptions revealed in the responses to the survey by CEOs could be substantiated by individual experiences of jurisdictional employees and board members. Variations between demographic and financial data provided by Alberta Education and that elicited from CEOs in their response to the survey were generally inconsequential to answering the research questions but were nonetheless identified in the interests of establishing the integrity of the study.

Such descriptive and exploratory analyses of data gathered as has been presented in the preceding pages have been reported with minimal comment by the researcher. Discussion of the research findings has been reserved for presentation in the next and final chapter of this dissertation.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The intent of this chapter is to apply information from the literature to the study data concomitant with presenting the researcher's insights on the study topic gained through the research process. Prior to such discussion of the findings, an overview of the study is used to restate briefly the research problem and recall main features of the study's methodology. Results of the data analysis are then summarized and discussed in light of the questions which guided the research. Finally, recommendations and implications of the findings are specified for educational practice and future research, along with the researcher's general conclusions and personal reflections about the study topic.

Overview of the Study

This study was conducted to identify the downsizing and/or budget reduction strategies used by Alberta school jurisdictions in response to financial constraint with the intent of understanding the decision-making processes involved and to gain some impression of the incidence and extent of downsizing activities throughout the province. A subsidiary intent was the investigation of any relationships which may have existed between the context in which those strategies evolved, the decision-making processes for determining the same strategies, and the actual strategies employed.

A review of the relevant literature and informal consultations with several Alberta school superintendents served as bases for the development of a questionnaire survey sent to the CEOs of all active school jurisdictions in the province. Post-survey interviews with personnel from two of the respondent jurisdictions were conducted to enhance the interpretation of the statistical analysis of responses to the questionnaire and, together with demographic and financial data provided by Alberta Education, to substantiate data collected via the survey.

Data analysis techniques reflected the descriptive and exploratory nature of the study. Descriptive techniques such as frequencies, means, and standard deviations were used in conjunction with exploratory techniques such as correlational analysis, factor analysis, and stepwise multiple regression analysis for the analyses of the quantitative questionnaire data. Open-ended responses on the questionnaires, documents returned by CEOs with questionnaires, and interviews provided valuable additional information about the human resources dimension of downsizing in school jurisdictions. Content analysis of those responses was supplemented by quoting perceptions of decision-making activities and downsizing/budget reduction strategies on the part of selected individuals.

Summary of Findings

This section reviews the major statistical findings obtained from analyses of responses to the forced-choice questions on the survey, from patterns in the responses to open-ended questions, and from supporting data provided by Alberta Education, the post-survey interviews, and a media clippings file maintained, not incidentally, throughout the duration of the study. As could be seen by the presentation of the results of the data analysis in the last chapter, several questions on the survey addressed closely allied topics or concerns. Primarily arranged that way as a means of addressing concerns of respondent recall and data consistency, these complementary data are integrated in this section through the presentation of the findings under the headings of the original research questions. Other findings which also emerged as the study progressed are presented within the context of the conceptual framework of the study.

The Extent and Distribution of Downsizing Activity in Alberta Public School Jurisdictions

What is the extent and distribution of downsizing activity in Alberta public school jurisdictions?

Although 73.4% of school jurisdictions in the province were operating on increased budgets for 1993-94, increases that generally did not keep pace with the rate of inflation[1], 71 (or 51%) jurisdictional CEOs took the opportunity of this study to indicate their organizations were involved in downsizing/budget reduction activities. Of those jurisdictions that did not participate in the study, it is known that the largest jurisdictions were also involved in similar cost-cutting exercises, often to a much greater extent than the survey respondents. For example, the total combined staff reduction figure for the downsizing jurisdictions[2] in the study was 148 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions. During the same period, Edmonton Public School Board publicly announced the need to cut approximately 180 teaching positions in order to meet its reduced budget made necessary by a 4.5% cut by Alberta Education of the jurisdiction's grant moneys (Edmonton Public School Board, 1993).

The decrease in actual grant moneys to approximately 32% of the province's school jurisdictions did not necessarily result in decreased budgets, many jurisdictions choosing to increase local requisitions to either compensate for the shortfall or to actually increase their expenditure potential. However, this particular avenue for avoiding cutback management has been removed by the provincial government's recent announcement (Government of Alberta, 1994b) that it will assume full responsibility for the funding of education by undertaking to "collect and redistribute all property taxes to fund education [effective for the 1994 tax year] and will phase in uniform mill rates for all properties by 1997." At the same time, the provincial government has indicated it will arrange for all school jurisdictions' CEOs to be "disemployed" and for all school superintendents to be appointed in future by Alberta Education--a very distinct indication that the government's revised goal of a 12.4% (or $239 million) overall reduction in education spending over the next four years will be enforced.[3] The introduction of a variety of student fees (for items such as textbooks and services such as bussing), which was used by 25% of survey respondents to increase income for the current financial year, may be the only direct income-creating activity permitted to jurisdictional administrators under the revised legislation due to be passed in the 1994 session of the Legislative Assembly.

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[1] Calculated as 1.8% between May 1992 and May 1993 by Statistics Canada.

[2] As defined on page 94.

Other more entrepreneurial activities engaged in by several jurisdictions to obtain revenue appeared to be of the type that are dependent upon individual personalities and/or their networks for initiation, or upon specific locations which are geographical hosts to large industrial or commercial interests. Competition among jurisdictions for corporate sponsorship or similar financial support seems unlikely to yield the majority of individual jurisdictions' anticipated financial needs for funding their current programs and there was little doubt among survey respondents that the cutback management experiences of approximately half of the province's school jurisdictions of the past year will be much more severe and more widespread in the upcoming triennium.

Activities relating to downsizing appeared to be proportionally slightly more prevalent in medium sized jurisdictions than in either small or large ones, though of the 120 respondents, 51, 18, and 2 were the respective numbers of jurisdictions identified by their CEOs as being thus engaged, suggesting that financial constraint so far had been distributed across the full range of jurisdictions, irrespective of size.

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[3] The Government's intention in respect of changes to financing education and the appointment of superintendents has been clarified since the conclusion of this study in a brochure entitled *School Amendment Act 1994 - Bill 19: Information Package* published by Alberta Education.

Based on the CEOs' indications of the extent of their budget reductions (ranging from $56 thousand to $4.5 million), the most common experience for the majority of downsizing jurisdictions was to identify ways of saving (or alternatively raising additional income of) approximately $100 thousand to $500 thousand, including the absorption of salary increases and higher costs of employment benefits. For many of the less-wealthy jurisdictions, a reprieve from anticipated hardship during the 1993-94 financial year was granted in the form of lottery moneys--distributed after the budget announcements as an interim resolution to the problem of fiscal equity. However, this reprieve was short-lived when it was announced by the provincial government in November 1993 that it would reduce transfer payments to each jurisdiction by an amount equal to a five percent salary rollback as of April 1994, leaving many jurisdictions with concerns as to how to absorb that unanticipated cut within their systems' 1993-94 budget. As revealed by the interviews, some jurisdictions have elected to use their consolidated revenues to absorb that particular shortfall; for other jurisdictions, staff were notified in February 1994 of potential layoffs at the end of April or June.

Various respondent CEOs cited their payroll costs as constituting the major share of their jurisdictions expenditures (between 75% and 90% of their total budgets) and, as such, the primary target of budgetary restraint, but the least favored. In the smaller jurisdictions in particular, very little flexibility was identified for adjusting that portion of their budgets. For all CEOs, it is anticipated that their budgetary projections revealed in response to the survey have since been voided by the previously referred to proposed changes in educational governance due for implementation with the 1994-97 triennium provincial business plan-*cum*-budget.

Strategies Employed by School Jurisdictions

What individual or combination of downsizing activities (including innovative approaches) are being used by school jurisdictions to meet actual or anticipated requirements of government fiscal constraint?

The perceived lack of flexibility in adjusting payroll expenses may well account for the prime ranking of direct reduction of capital expenditures by approximately 75% of downsizing jurisdictions as a viable strategy for downsizing/budget reduction. While natural attrition and voluntary retirements were seen by survey respondents as feasible means for cutting expenditure (used by 72% of downsizing jurisdictions for classroom teachers, 62% for secretarial and paraprofessional staff, 56% for middle/senior administrative staff, 28% for specialist staff, and 27% for professional support staff such as curriculum consultants), by far the greatest emphasis by CEOs and interviewees was on strategies that exemplified the expressed obligation of virtually all respondents to keep the impact of financial constraint away from the classroom. For the majority of jurisdictions this translated into the previously identified preference for reducing capital expenditures and, for fewer jurisdictions, reviewing operational costs in the areas of energy consumption, office management, and services available on contract bases.

Decisions to cut programs selectively had been made by 45% of downsizing jurisdictions, closely followed by reduction of maintenance of facilities and reduced purchases of library materials. Wage rollbacks, while obviously considered by probably every jurisdiction as a result of the provincial government's mandate to do so, remained an unpopular strategy, though 31% of downsizing jurisdictions did indicate they had negotiated a reduction (of unspecified proportions) in salaries. Amongst other budget reduction strategies selected by over 25% of downsizing jurisdictions were increased leave opportunities for staff, devolution of management responsibilities to schools, and voluntary severances.

Amongst the lowest ranking strategies used by jurisdictions were various restructuring possibilities (including changes within the head office, regrouping students, or sharing services with other jurisdictions), cutting programs across the board, and enforced severance. In line with enforced severance being one of the least favored strategies (used by just under seven percent of downsizing jurisdictions), provision of outplacement aid had also been provided by just three jurisdictions (approximately four percent). For most jurisdictions no one individual budget reduction strategy was depended upon; 22% of the downsizing jurisdictions used a combination of three strategies, though no particular combination prevailed as most favored.

Despite an expressed desire by administrators for "new" alternatives to most of the readily identified budget reduction strategies, few innovative approaches were evident, although the restructuring that had occurred in one of the jurisdictions visited for interviews had all the hallmarks of "totally rethinking the situation." A new structure and philosophy for delivery of services from the central office had been determined prior to identification of positions to be cut--all within the context of an established and widely acknowledged strategic plan. Positions to be cut were then apparently vacated to a great extent by natural attrition, secondly by redeployment, and finally by layoffs. Remaining positions were redefined so as not to fulfill traditional roles and exemplified the sort of success (in the eyes of the employees) obtainable through innovative thinking.

Interviewees also revealed that some groups of employees (particularly custodial staff) had given considerable thought to spreading the effects of cutbacks throughout their ranks by agreeing to work reduced hours and thereby save positions.

That a number of the 49 respondents to the study who did not consider themselves to be downsizing or reducing their expenditure per student at the time of the survey had actively determined which budget cutting strategies they would be using in the future was a direct acknowledgment of the extent to which cutback management now features as an ongoing administrative responsibility for most (if not all) publicly funded school jurisdictions in Alberta.

The Relationship Between Context and the Selection of Strategies

Does context, such as demographics and decision motives (that is, whether downsizing decisions are based on the perception of fiscal constraint as a threat or as an opportunity) account for the downsizing strategies adopted by each school jurisdiction?

Of the various contextual elements selected for inclusion in the survey (extraoganizational influences, demography, and CEOs' decision motives, experience and education), not surprisingly economic influences were ranked as having the most impact on respondents' decision making regarding downsizing/budget reduction strategies (by just under 77% of downsizing respondents). Where economic influences predominated, the selection of the "softer" budget reduction strategies -- natural attrition of middle/senior administrative staff and secretarial/para-professional staff, early/voluntary retirements--prevailed; as did strategies where criteria for cutbacks had been determined prior to the current fiscal imperatives and generally removed from what could be perceived to be subjective decision making at the central office--enforced severance based on seniority and decisions made at the school level within the realms of school-based management. The researcher was not able to establish links through the data analysis between the other contextual elements identified above and jurisdictions' use of the various downsizing/budget reduction strategies.

Decision-Making Criteria as Determinants of Strategies

What criteria were used in the decision-making process to determine strategies? That is, for example, was the emphasis on efficiency (via selective cuts) or equity (using across the board cuts)?

A propensity for downsizing jurisdictions to adopt rational decision-making processes (over 83% indicated they had done so) was reflected in the same jurisdictions' selection of all the downsizing/budget reduction strategies. That is, approximately 80% or more of those jurisdictions which indicated they had used individual strategies had also indicated using rational decision-making processes. No particular relationship other than that overarching pattern was revealed for the other decision-making models/typologies.

When the various individual characteristics (criteria) of the decision-making models were grouped as items (by factor analysis) four distinct decision-making factors representing outcomes, processes, authority, and democracy were identified. Using those factors as the basis of further analysis, it was revealed that jurisdictions which had used criteria based on outcomes (for example, economic goals, educational values) as the basis of their decision-making and also had identified their decision-making activities as typifying the political model, had a greater propensity than other readily identifiable groups to use staff reduction strategies (as opposed to redeployment, rationalization of services, or direct spending strategies). Other analyses revealed that less significant relationships also existed. Decision-making outcome oriented jurisdictions tended to use rationalization strategies and strategies which reduced direct spending. Those jurisdictions which used decision-making processes emphasizing the process itself indicated a propensity to favor redeployment strategies--both the process and the selected strategies noticeably emphasizing an empathy with the human relations aspects of organizational management.

Individual decision-making criteria cited most often by CEOs of downsizing jurisdictions to determine which budget reduction strategies their jurisdictions would use included: weighing up the costs and benefits of alternatives against each other (mean 4.16 on a five-point scale); concern with educational values (mean 3.99); and expressed concerns with protecting employee morale, equity, and achieving economic goals. In respect of criteria related to decision-making processes, most downsizing jurisdictions felt the process they had used was adequate to achieve its goals (mean 4.04) and indicated decisions were most often arrived at by consensus (mean 3.93) and based on enough information (mean 3.83). Other criteria reported by decision makers as featuring on a regular basis (but less often than those criteria previously mentioned) included voting on decisions, considering alternatives in a logical sequence, personal stress incurred as part of the process, and a concern for efficiency. Despite the sensitivity and uncertainty (as expressed by respondents to the survey and interviewees) of many of the issues at hand, decision-making processes seldom (or in many cases, never) were reported as featuring bargaining, conflict, or a sense of "groping for solutions."

Criteria which featured together most often (mean 3.66) in the decision-making process usually featured a preoccupation with the achievement of specified outcomes--be they economic, educational, or related to personnel. Together with such priorities, jurisdictions indicated a propensity to consider the costs and benefits of different alternatives in a logical sequence and to involve different people at different times in the process.

Whilst the literature indicated a direct relationship between an emphasis on efficiency as a decision-making criterion and the use of strategies exemplifying selective budgetary cuts, and between an emphasis on equity as a decision-making criteria and the use of strategies exemplifying across the board cuts (Whetten, 1981), the results of this study failed to support those contentions. Only just over 45% of survey respondents who indicated a concern for efficiency as a decision-making criterion also chose to cut programs selectively, and less than six percent of survey respondents indicated a concern for equity as a decision-making criterion concomitant with deciding to cut programs across the board. Whether such results occurred due to the substantial social connotations now associated with the word "equity", as opposed to the word's currency when most of the studies reported in the literature were conducted, is worthy of consideration. However, the scope of the responses to the survey were not considered broad enough to encourage further exploration of that issue.

Amongst the myriad of other general observations which related criteria in the decision-making process to the use of various strategies, none was selected for individual identification or further discussion, it being recognized that many of the relationships were in fact quite logical ones and, therefore, of meaning only to this study in reconciling CEOs' responses to different parts of the survey. The only area of obvious "mismatches" occurred between data sources as opposed to inconsistencies within the questionnaire; and Hewton (1986) claims that when "two 'pictures' do not match, there are obviously political factors at work" (p. 5). Inconsistencies between data sources were restricted to total budget figures proffered by CEOs and those provided by Alberta Education; and were, overall, sufficiently close to each other not to invalidate other aspects of the study.

The Decision-Making Process

What model/typology of decision making from the literature best resembles the process employed by the administrator/s in each school jurisdiction?

Respondents to the survey indicated their jurisdictions had most often used processes and criteria that exemplified the rational-bureaucratic model of decision making in determining which downsizing/budget reduction strategies were to be used. The distinct preferences for using expert senior administrative officers as sources of information and recommendations showed a certain deference to the hierarchical aspects of this model; the overwhelmingly high rate of selection (by over 83% of the respondents) of the rational sequence of decision-making activities as best describing their jurisdiction's processes indicated a preoccupation with an ordered logical process also typical of the same model. The rank ordering of individual decision-making criteria, while not as distinct in favoring the same model, did tend to support the respondents' previous selections by featuring rational/bureaucratic characteristics most often in the first ten listed.

Despite measures taken to ensure the integrity of the questionnaire, it must be acknowledged that CEOs, in responding to the questionnaire, could have, in effect made a political decision to report rational decision-making as the process used in their jurisdiction. Such action may have been taken in the (unfounded) belief that rational decision making is superior, more acceptable, or even more politick than the other recognizable models/typologies. Alternatively, the use of rational processes may have been a deliberate (political) decision by CEOs to maintain control of the decision-making process.

Participation in Decision Making

Who participated in the decision-making process in each school jurisdiction?

Two questions on the survey sought information about participation. The first listed five groups of people representing defined constituencies, and the second queried jurisdictions' administrative responses to requests from groups for involvement in the decision-making process. The ranking of formal participants reinforced the previous assertion that jurisdictions had, in the main, used rational-bureaucratic decision-making processes as reflected in the hierarchy of those involved in determining their jurisdictions' responses to financial constraint. From a very high (98.6%, virtually obligatory) involvement of board members, jurisdictions then chose to involve principals, teachers, ATA representatives, community members (38%), in that order, and various "others" (23.9%) including a variety of staff from central office executives to CUPE membership, students, and the parish clergy. This sense of a hierarchy of involvement was also evident when CEOs were given the opportunity to indicate who they thought should be involved in the decision-making process relating to downsizing/budget restraint, as opposed to those who were. While the CEO and board members were ranked as equally deserving of most involvement, subsequent preferences were for a small group of expert employees and other stakeholders, with consultants only receiving credit for minimal input (mean 2.14 on a five-point scale where the number 1 was used to indicate no involvement at all).

The gap between jurisdictions' formal involvement of groups and those groups' expressed desire to participate was illustrated by responses to the second of these two questions. Representatives of the Alberta Teachers' Association, while having been involved in decision making regarding downsizing/budget restraint by 40.8% of downsizing jurisdictions, had requested involvement in only 16.9% of those same jurisdictions; principals had been involved in the decision making by 88.7% of the downsizing jurisdictions and had requested involvement in 8.5%; and teachers, while having been involved in 53.5% of downsizing jurisdictions' decision making, had requested involvement in 9.8%. While it was established that over 80% of requests to be involved were accepted, it is not known whether respondents included those accepted groups as participants in answer to the first question or not. Either way, administrators' propensity to initiate involvement and such a high positive response to requests are obvious incentives for groups to seek participation, should they not automatically be involved. Emphasis by several of the interviewees (including board members and senior administrators) on the increasing desirability for as many stakeholders as possible to be involved in collaborative decision making relating to such issues as downsizing/budget reductions, regardless of their motivation for wanting wider participation, augurs well for those seeking greater involvement in the process. Interviewees all emphasized the existence of what Musella (1991) identified as the growing expectation for consultation on all issues: "We are expected to have participation on all procedures for decision making; this has increased dramatically and [educational administrators] are not very good at it" (p.8).

Just under a quarter of CEOs who saw budget restraint as a threat (as opposed to an opportunity) chose to involve only board members in the decision-making processes whereas under five percent of CEOs who saw the situation as an opportunity did likewise. For CEOs perceiving such situations as threatening, it would appear there is a greater propensity to involve only those people who are absolutely necessary in the strategic decision-making processes.

The Impact of Decisions Relating to Downsizing on Personnel/Employment Policies

What, if any, perceived impact have decisions relating to downsizing had on personnel/employment policies?

Responses to the questions probing this aspect of how jurisdictions had responded to financial constraint did not reveal a great deal of activity, or in fact a belief by many jurisdictions' administrators that there was much flexibility in this area. The previously noted anomalies relating to job/sharing and part-time employment (that is, some jurisdictions provided full employment benefits to employees who worked 0.5 or more of a full time position, whereas other jurisdictions provided such benefits on a *pro rata* basis) could certainly be partly blamed for the only mediocre exploitation (by less than 30% of downsizing jurisdictions) of this option which is so highly favored in the corporate sector. Similarly, only a quarter of downsizing jurisdictions indicated they were considering the need for flexibility in individual teaching staff (either by requiring more specializations of beginning teachers or providing professional development as a means of providing wider expertise within current staff) should they be required to cut back in this area.

Other changes to personnel policies/practices which could be vigorously opposed by the ATA, but which have nonetheless been investigated and/or adopted by other educational systems, attracted only minimal response (approximately three percent) from Alberta's downsizing jurisdictions: the use of paraprofessional staff to perform limited aspects of functions currently performed by certificated staff, and employment of new recruits on the lower end of the salary grid among others. Over 46% of downsizing jurisdictions indicated they had not made any changes to their personnel policies/practices as a response to financial constraint.

Incorporation of a variety of criteria other than seniority in jurisdictions' redundancy/redeployment policies was revealed by documents that were submitted with returned questionnaires. The researcher was not able to establish whether such criteria have yet been tested legally and/or industrially, but there appeared to be little doubt by human resources' administrators that there would be few difficulties in implementing such policies. It was also noticeable that a number of the policy documents which had recently been reviewed appeared to be aiming for some administrative flexibility concurrent with portraying a sense of fairness in the way criteria would be implemented and a concern for retaining quality teaching staff.

The Context of Decision Making Regarding Downsizing

In addition to the specific contextual issues explored by the main research questions, analysis of several other variables provided results which are noted here as precursors to comments in the next section.

CEOs' decision motives did have several noticeable links to which decision making processes were used by jurisdictions and which characteristics featured most prominently in those processes. CEOs who perceived financial constraint as a threat indicated a higher propensity to use the administrative model of decision making. The same group also identified the decision-making characteristics which factored together as "authoritative" as featuring more often in their jurisdictions' decision-making processes than in the jurisdictions of CEOs who saw financial constraint as an opportunity. Individual decision-making characteristics linked to the same group included a greater propensity for their systems to have featured conflict over alternatives, decision making to have been by top management only, and for the CEOs to have experienced more personal stress as part of the process. Situations perceived as threatening by the CEO, therefore, appear to engender reactions least conducive to the activities identified as necessary for successful downsizing (Chabotar & Honan, 1990; Zerchykov, 1982).

Strategic plans, while not originally identified as a contextual variable in the study, were revealed to be of considerable importance to the decision-making process and the downsizing/budget reduction strategies used by the various school systems. Approximately 80% of downsizing jurisdictions identified strategic plans to be of significant value not only in maintaining a focus on the educational priorities of the organization during decision-making, but also in relation to its function in facilitating participation by a number of stakeholders and providing some degree of organizational commitment and cultural bonding.

In seeking to establish some links between CEOs' education/experience and decision-making activities, it was noted that respondents with the least educational qualifications had most often indicated their jurisdictions had used voting as part of the decision-making process. CEOs with a master's degree as their highest qualification were also linked most often with use of decision-making characteristics that factored together as being outcome oriented and those that were authority oriented. For CEOs with doctoral degrees, there appeared to be greater propensity for their jurisdictions to use bargaining to arrive at solutions, greater propensity for top management only to be involved in decisions, and greatest concern with equity--characteristics from both the rational and political decision-making models. Other "trends" for jurisdictions whose CEOs had least experience at that level included greatest concern for protecting employee morale but least expressed concern with organizational culture. Conversely, jurisdictions of CEOs with most experience at that level least often voted on decisions or identified the decision-making process as being personally stressful.

Contextually, one of the greatest problems for CEOs involved in making decisions regarding downsizing and/or budget reductions appeared to be the annual (instead of triennial) funding provided by Alberta Education. Calls for three year fiscal planning and triennial allocations were made by several of the survey respondents and interviewees and there were definite indications of CEOs' frustration with the entire funding arrangements, many insisting on the need for fundamental changes to be made to the administrative structure of education in the province. Concurrent with such sentiments was the recognition by many of the CEOs that massive changes (undefined at that time) were likely to take place within the next two to three years.

The Decision-Making Processes Relating to Downsizing

The most prevalent sources of information (both with means of approximately 3.4 on a five-point scale) used by decision makers were financial forecasting techniques and individual judgment. Use of computed information using management data bases featured only occasionally (mean 2.7). Reinforcing those choices were CEOs' indicated dependence on finance officers within the organization and past experience of decision makers for their recommendations on downsizing/budget reduction strategies. Personnel officers and informal consultation with colleagues in other jurisdictions also ranked highly in this regard. The pervading pattern among CEOs was to depend upon a small number of sources both for general information and advice on specific strategies.

The Content of Decisions Made in Respect of Downsizing

Overall, employees were assessed by their CEOs as being more satisfied with the downsizing/budget reduction strategies used the closer those employees were located to the central office administrative decision making. Just under 95% of CEOs assessed central office administrators as satisfied in this respect, 93% for principals, 88% for central office clerical staff, and 80% for teachers. Assessment of employees' morale indicated some congruence with employees' judgment of strategies to be fair and their feelings in respect of the overall situation. Over 50% of respondents assessed their jurisdiction's morale as high (point 4 on a five-point scale where 5 indicated "very high"), and generally attributed such feelings to positive efforts on the part of administration to maintain a "good" culture, partly by emphasizing participation in decision making and recognition that choices of budget reduction strategies were objectively based.

Whether it be most appropriately assigned to the context or content components of the conceptual framework of the study, communication of downsizing activities was also of considerable concern to interviewees. Regardless of their role within their respective jurisdictions, virtually all interviewees suggested this aspect of downsizing/budget reduction was one of the most difficult to manage. Most interviewees favored information about cutback management being passed on to employees as soon as possible, with the proviso that there was indeed actual information to be shared. Similarly, they also emphasized the need for honesty in dealing with those affected by the cutbacks, despite the acknowledged propensity for some administrators in the past to have attempted to soften the trauma for affected employees by perhaps downplaying the severity and potential personal impact of the situation. A respect for employees' rights for access to information was also revealed during interviews.

The study did not identify any truly innovative strategies that had been tried by jurisdictions in their efforts to respond to financial constraint, though there were several variations on standard practices and an expressed desire to avoid those strategies which were recognizably associated with personal trauma for employees or which were assessed to affect the quality of education programs. Many of the strategies used by jurisdictions were acknowledged both by survey respondents and interviewees as requiring those employees remaining with the jurisdiction to maintain or even expand educational programs/services with fewer resources, be they human, financial or material. The potential for this situation to be inefficient as well as educationally ineffective was not denied, though study participants, much to their own dismay, were not forthcoming with many resolutions for such situations.

Discussion

The findings of the study, in addition to exploring and describing the extent of downsizing/budget reduction activity in Alberta school jurisdictions, also supported Hardy's (1987, 1990b) contention that the previously identified elements comprising the conceptual framework of this study encompass a variety of relationships. Some of the results of the survey served simply to validate the questionnaire's internal consistency and so will not receive further attention in this dissertation. Other findings are considered to offer insight into the management of financial constraint and, therefore, worthy of discussion, particularly within the context of prior research.

Of paramount concern to most administrators of school jurisdictions in Alberta, as this study concluded, were the fundamental changes announced by the provincial government to the governance of schooling throughout the province. Although members of the education community who participated in the Fiscal Realities meetings conducted by Alberta Education in fall of 1992 (Alberta Education, 1993b, p. 35) identified "the present fiscal situation [as providing] a chance to make fundamental changes in education rather than just small changes", it is doubtful they envisaged the changes actually promulgated by the provincial government.

For those participants in the study who had derived a variety of ways to enhance their jurisdiction's financial status, many must by now realize that some of the activities they had anticipated using to increase their jurisdiction's income will, in effect, be unavailable. The most obvious of these is the option to increase local requisitions through taxation, an option which had been, or was intended to be, exercised by over 40% of respondents to the study. Such action by the government would appear to be based on sound (if not popular) economic principles--that decreasing expenditure has a more predictable impact on financial condition than increasing revenues (Chabotar & Honan, 1990). Cibulka (1987) similarly notes that school administrators in times of restraint have a tendency to engage in a pattern of denial and temporizing which would likely persist until actual revenue shortages are imposed.

The government's mandate for amalgamations (Government of Alberta, 1994c) as a means of reducing the number of school boards in the province from over 140 to approximately 60 also carried an accompanying requirement for school boards to focus on "administration, transportation, facilities, employee contract negotiations, planning and budgeting, and ensuring schools meet expectations . . . [and give] schools more authority in deploying resources" (p. 2). That latter requirement may, in effect, diminish the apparent minimal consideration revealed by the study of administrators reviewing costs at the actual "chalk face". Responses to the study included no mention of attempts to redistribute resources more efficiently by such strategies as vertical timetabling, and there was only one proposal for regrouping students for instructional purposes despite the fact that the researcher is aware of such successful "restructuring" of educational programs by a number of schools within the province. Perhaps those programs' existence at the school level, as opposed to being jurisdictional policy, highlights the potential for innovative ideas relating to resource management to occur at the individual or school cluster level--especially in those instances where school based management was a reality prior to the identified need for budget restraint.

The provincial government's belief that larger school jurisdictions will achieve economies of scale seems more likely to have influenced their restructuring decisions than a desire for amalgamations to serve as the impetus for innovations in classroom management. That several jurisdictions have been investigating rationalization on a cooperative rather than a unified basis would tend to confirm that many administrators agree with conventional wisdom that larger amalgamated jurisdictions would have the potential for achieving greater efficiencies on many essential administrative services. The greatest contention is over the constitutional right for dissentient groups, in most instances Catholic parents, to establish separate school jurisdictions. As interview transcripts from the study revealed, there is a strong sense of the need for administrative autonomy held by those interests. In respect of decision-making processes related to downsizing/budget reduction, analyses of the data collected for this study suggested that, overall, jurisdiction size is relatively unimportant (though it is anticipated this could have been quite different had respondents included two very large school jurisdictions which elected not to participate.)

There is considerable disputation that administrative efficiency or effectiveness is correlated with school jurisdiction size (Coleman & LaRocque, 1990) and that economies of scale can be achieved through amalgamations of jurisdictions as a ready means of reducing costs, when stated in terms of operating costs per student. Despite this, the amalgamation of a number of very small jurisdictions, one having as few as 80 resident students and several being within the 100 to 200 students range, would surely minimize duplication of services by those jurisdictions least able to afford it.

For those jurisdictions (approximately 30% of those which were downsizing/reducing budgets) that had moved to site-based management either prior to or as part of downsizing, the benefits of setting priorities at the school level were generally acknowledged as facilitating cutback management at the central office. Acknowledgment of these benefits lends credibility to Siegel and Smoley's (1989) contention that reduction of central office staff in school systems can be compared to the decrease in size of white collar middle management in private enterprise and that flattening the organizational structure is a viable budget cutting strategy which could also accelerate the decision-making capabilities of the jurisdiction. Their belief that such restructuring would be most resisted by those most vulnerable in its implementation is being borne out in part through the current protests by some school board members about the provincial government's proposal for restructuring (which encourages greater school self-management and fewer powers for school boards). Restructuring in this regard is seen by some researchers (for example, Oehm (1991) and Harwood (1991)) as having the potential to shift resources to the school site and revive sinking budget balances at the system level. It may also be interpreted as a move by the provincial government to curtail the influence and power of school boards on educational issues, a tendency that is noted by Williams (1986) to accompany an economic recession.

The minimal commitment to fundamental restructuring shown by downsizing school jurisdictions in the study is accredited by Whetten (1981) to administrators' propensity to blame their financial difficulties on the environment and their consequent lack of incentive to review institutionalized practices and belief systems. He further contends that it is the perception that very severe penalties will result from making a wrong strategic decision (especially in a perceived crisis) that inhibits the possibility of decision-making processes leading to innovative solutions.

The expressed desire by many participants in the study for equity in school funding is ostensibly also to be resolved by the provincial government's decision to collect and redistribute all property taxes to fund education, thereby providing public funding of education from one centralized source. This decision is also quite obviously aimed at controlling costs, particularly in the administrative areas. It might also be interpreted as a government exercise in shock therapy for those jurisdictions engaged in organizational denial of the current financial situation, designed to negate their resistance to planning for downsizing, a resistance that was revealed in some of the responses to open-ended questions on the survey. According to Smith (1986), Cibulka (1987), and Chabotar and Honan (1990), such resistance is not unusual and tends, if unresolved, to lead to last minute cutbacks and exacerbate the harm to operations and morale.

Results of this study tended to support Pashiardis' (1990) contention that labeling an issue either as a threat or an opportunity influences who gets involved in the issue. Unlike Tversky and Kahneman (1981), who believed greater risks are taken in response to threats rather than opportunities, the considerably higher proportion of CEOs of downsizing school jurisdictions in Alberta who perceived budget restraint as a threat rather than an opportunity and also chose only to involve board members in the decision-making process was not seen by the researcher as an indication of those people being willing to take risks. It would appear from this study that the labeling of a situation as a threat was more likely to diminish the likelihood of taking more risks; such a view also led to involving less people and using more limited sources of information. Such likelihood was also observed by Dutton and Jackson (1987) and Pashiardis and Baker (1992), whose research findings concurred with those of this study--that CEOs who perceived a situation as threatening would restrict their consultations to employee experts in key areas, quite often in a desire to arrive at a quick decision and occasionally abetted by potential participants' desire not to be involved in an issue which had been acknowledged as a threat. Perhaps that risk has been heightened since the survey was conducted by the impending recapture of financial control of education by the central government--CEOs may react differently. Knowing they are to be "disemployed" regardless of the decisions they make could tempt some CEOs who perceive the threats to have become more acute (and several respondents to the survey did indicate an inclination to change their perspective if further budgetary cuts were imposed), to become more risk oriented or, alternatively, to become ultra conservative in their approach to decision making if they perceive this is likely to be a desired characteristic of future superintendency appointees. Perhaps Berger's (1982) findings that external successors to superintendents who resigned their positions during downsizing programs were likely to be more effective in managing the downsizing may be one of the government's more subtle purposes in this aspect of their agenda for educational reform.

For those CEOs who did see opportunities in financial constraint (approximately 58% of those in downsizing jurisdictions), the reasons given for that stance very much concur with those of Culbertson (1977) expressed during the time of school decline, particularly the opportunity to address problems in more than a piecemeal fashion. The inhibition often cited actually to take advantage of that situation concurs with Lortie's (1987) assertion that the unavailability of long-term budgets restricts such activity. Cibulka (1987) also noted that the most glaring and consistent deficiencies across systems in responding to school decline were in the area of multiyear budget planning, goal setting and revenue forecasting. Whether jurisdictions will be able to take advantage of the longer term budgets announced by the provincial government at the end of February 1994 is yet to be seen. Whetten (1981) did note that despite a number of administrators making claims for financial constraint to be a time for opportunity during the time of school decline, very little innovation resulted with the results that most educational organizations were "basically doing less of the same" (p. 81).

Amongst the many important questions that Zerchykov (1982) claimed remained unanswered following the period of school decline in the late 1970s-early 1980s was whether the decisions made by contracting school jurisdictions were "the product of rational, organizational bargaining [political] or other modes of making choices" (p. viii). However, CEOs in this study indicated fairly clearly that they believed the processes they had been engaged in were aligned to the rational model. This would contradict Nutt's (1984) premise that nothing remotely resembling the normative decision-making processes described in the literature is used by school jurisdiction administrators, but would concur with Whetten's (1981) assertion (seemingly unavailable to Zerchykov) that decisions at that time were indeed made within closed-rational orientations (as opposed to open-political). That is, budget reductions were perceived as a problem requiring the passive solution of increased efficiency within the organization rather then looking to the wider environment and seeking "more innovative solutions involving a shift in the services provided or clients served" (p. 83).

To Cibulka (1987), the rational budgetary processes used in response to school decline during the late 1970s-early 1980s were "not so much responsive to environmental pressures as autonomous from them" (p. 8) whereas he identified the political budgetary processes, in contrast, as focusing "on the interface between an organization and its environment" (p. 8). That distinction appears to support the results of this study--CEOs both recognizing the "rationality" of their budget reduction strategies and tending to focus their responses within their jurisdictions.

CEOs' indications of the propensity for their jurisdictions to favor decision-making characteristics which emphasized costs and benefits of alternatives being weighed against each other and other incremental decision-making activities when considering downsizing/budget reduction strategies lends credibility to the choice of strategic decision-making models/typologies as central to the conceptual framework for this study. However, their jurisdictions' apparent preferences for using rational decision making and not political processes defies the unanimity in the literature which suggests that political behavior will occur during times of scarce resources

(Estler, 1988, Hardy 1987, Hewton, 1986, Pfeffer & Salancik, 1974). On the other hand, the processes used tend to substantiate Estler's (1988), Wimpelberg and Boyd's (1990), McGlashan and Singleton's (1987), Chabotar and Dentler's(1985), Duignan and Ponder's (1978), and Tucker and Zeigler's (1980, cited in Greene, 1992) proposal that the rational-bureaucratic model of decision making is the most appropriate and most preponderant in the school system setting. Estler's specific application of the rational model claims its value lies in its tendency to provide "the appearance of rationality to processes necessarily surrounded by ambiguity" (p. 308), ambiguity which becomes particularly pertinent in scenarios such as the present, when economic constraint coincides with demands to increase educational services and/or educational priorities.

The reliance of many jurisdictions on the rational decision-making model for the purpose of determining their responses to financial constraint conforms with Chaffee's (1983) advice that this model is most appropriate for strategic decisions, especially if the traditional perspective of that model (hierarchically focused) is decentralized to incorporate broad participation, with the proviso that such participation must be entered into in good faith. The essential nature of participatory processes for implementation of strategic decisions is also highlighted by Cope (1981), Johns (1988), and McGrath (1986)--especially when there is a lack of money to control the level of conflict amongst interest groups (Dembowski et al., 1979). One jurisdiction visited for interviews also exemplified participation through committees or task forces--agreed upon as an essential component for "success" by both acknowledged authorities on downsizing (Hardy, 1990a; Tomasko, 1992) and writers on organizational decision making (Owens, 1987; Lieberman, 1986). The tendency for jurisdictions to depend more on consensus than voting to make decisions appears to accompany the trend for wider participation in the decision-making process and is in accord with advice which evolved from the experiences of school decline in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Eisenberger, 1978).

Those jurisdictions with operational strategic plans appeared to be best positioned to respond to imposed financial constraint. The benefits expounded by many survey respondents and interviewees alike for using strategic plans to guide cutback management corresponded with the advantages proposed in the literature by Hardy (1990a) and Johnson (1987). They provide long-term approaches to matching the organization's activities to the environment and its resource capabilities as well as involving stakeholders in determining the priorities which can be used to guide all decision making.

Those jurisdictions, though relatively few in number at the time of the study, which also approached downsizing with a view to getting work done without necessarily having people on the payroll, appear to have chosen what the literature endorses as the optimal approach for avoiding the harmful effects of dramatic downturns in employment in times of financial constraint (Aguilar et al., 1991; Khan, 1987; Milkovich et al., 1988). The concern expressed, by interviewees in particular, that reduced workforces in many jurisdictions were still attempting to accomplish the same or a disproportionate amount of work is a valid concern according to Deeprose (1992) and may well result in a lack of anticipated gains if not corrected either by contracting out more work and revising all organizational procedures in an attempt to cut out any unnecessary work (as one of the interviewees indicated her/his jurisdiction was in the process of doing).

The preoccupation of most downsizing jurisdictions with the extraoganizational economic influences on their decision making regarding downsizing may well have disguised or overshadowed the political influences which Hardy (1990a) identifies as more important and Cibulka (1987) claims forces recognition of the existence of budget constraint which cannot be managed by denial or temporizing. Those respondents who recognized the political component of financial constraint were also those who elected to use the strategies described in the literature as most likely to be effective in achieving required budgetary savings (Chabotar & Honan, 1990; Duignan & Ponder, 1978; Hardy, 1990a; Milkovich et al., 1988)--especially those strategies related to staff reduction through long-term human resources planning as opposed to dramatic layoffs to achieve short-term requirements. The tendency for downsizing jurisdictions to use natural attrition and early retirements as their preferred mode for reducing staff (chosen by over 70% of survey respondents) can be, according to Tomasko (1992), a false economy if, in effect, it results in the loss of good performers (perhaps along with some "deadwood") and the consequent need to replace some of the people originally let go.

Similarly, the decision by many school jurisdictions to cut support positions (apparently based on the assumption that these positions had least impact on the classroom and there is an intrinsic value in keeping the pupil:teacher ratio as low as possible) may subsequently lead to pressures to restaff as soon as possible and on "survivors" to cope with an increased work load. For classroom teachers, support staff cuts to specific areas are very likely to increase their load of clerical chores and to inhibit their access to necessary professional and personal support. Such cuts are described in the literature as "whittling away at the edges" and they are scorned in many of the reports on downsizing for the lack of restructuring involved. (Alternatively, writers such as Hardy (1987) indicate a belief that the business model of "surgery rather than shaving" is inappropriate in educational administration because of education's restricted economic options--salaries in business enterprises often comprise only a small percentage of total budget (Tomasko, 1992).)

In light of previous research on the impact of class size on learning outcomes (Monk, 1992) and the varying methods of calculating pupil:teacher ratios (especially when large central office certificated staff are included in the tally and there is no provision for differences in quality among teachers), there appears to be little empirical foundation for the preoccupation by teachers and/or administrators and/or the professional association with this criterion of educational management (Dennison, 1984). Similarly, it could be argued that funding arguments based on expenditure per student are not well founded, Coleman and LaRocque (1990) having shown that per pupil costs are not good indicators of student achievement.

A contextual variable omitted from the study (but commented upon by several interviewees from one jurisdiction) was the value of previous experiences of downsizing contributing to the sensitivity of administrators in dealing with the issues involved. In particular, interviewees in one jurisdiction praised the different style of communication and decision-making employed by senior administrators in the current downsizing activities, not that the previous downsizing was seen to be mishandled (in fact it appeared to follow much of the advice available in the literature at that time), but rather that the administrators brought their deeper appreciation of the situation to bear on the current process. Such experience is noted by Tomasko (1992) and Ryzewic (1981) as a significant component in successful downsizings, a component that should be of relevance for just over a quarter of Alberta's school jurisdictions.

Implications and Recommendations for Practice

Because this was an exploratory/descriptive study, it was not anticipated that the results of the research would yield definitive recommendations for decision making regarding downsizing of school jurisdictions. Nonetheless, there are several guidelines for practice which, although not necessarily new, may well function as reminders and decision-making foci for educational administrators confronted with the need to manage financial constraint. In particular, advice proffered in downsizing/cutback management literature, though not specifically related to the management of school education, appears to have relevancy for contemporary CEOs of school jurisdictions. In addition, many of the observations made during the period of school decline (particularly those of Chabotar and Honan) have been tested by the current study and found to warrant renewed attention, despite the provincial government's observation that "the economic and policy environment has changed significantly since 1984" (Government of Alberta, 1992, p. 1).

Most notable of the advice from the broader literature was the need for strategic decision processes to precede fundamental restructuring, not just rearrangement, of jurisdictional administration (including mandated amalgamations). Where this approach was evident, a number of other organizational and employee benefits seemed to accrue. There was greater likelihood of cutting less-necessary administrative processes and consequential diminution of the expectation that employees would be expected to achieve "more with less". There was also evidence of commitment to the outcomes of the strategic decision-making process by those involved and a greater awareness of the organization's educational priorities.

From a longer-term perspective, one of the biggest challenges identified in the downsizing literature was for organizations that do achieve hard-won gains from budget reduction strategies not to return to excess staffing when economic pressures are eased (Appelbaum et al., 1987, Stoten, 1989; Tomasko, 1990). For education systems under pressure from the wider community and a number of special interest groups to provide specific programs, it would appear prudent that such programs be approached on the basis of individual projects and staffed accordingly, thereby diminishing the inflexibility of many employment policies currently in force and not creating the long-term staffing commitments or community expectations that are now proving so difficult to manage. In the immediate future, project/program funding could be continued on the premise that results will validate its continuance or by advocacy groups mobilizing alternative sources of funding.

An integrated system of personnel policies and practices is also cited in the literature (Tomasko, 1992) as the essential component of successful downsizings, often negating the need for the other elements identified throughout the literature as necessary for downsizings to succeed. Those other elements that downsizing jurisdictions would do well to consider in the current absence of flexible employment policies/practices include extensive consultation programs, the provision of counseling, advance notice of layoffs when possible, voluntary severance, drawing on previous experiences of downsizing, and generous redundancy compensation. For organizations out of the educational arena, policies incorporating such flexibility within existing personnel (that is, beginning staff with more specializations and provision of in service training) also appear to be much more prevalent and do not require organizational upheaval to implement.

It would be even more prudent for jurisdictions to review all human resources policies and practices with economic flexibility and educational excellence in mind. Previous tendencies for systems to establish expensive "permanent" in-house consultancy services would seem better served to engage such services on a needs and/or changing priorities basis, negating not only ongoing payroll commitments but also the considerable on-costs associated with larger central office staffs and the potential for such staff to be accused of being out of touch with the realities of the chalk-face. If consultancy service cuts are considered to be "far from the classroom," as indicated in this study, then such a decision would seem to be in accord with many jurisdictions' priorities. This is not to suggest that such services are not valuable, but simply that they may be more efficiently (and even effectively) procured on a contractual basis. Similarly, cost-effectiveness assessments should be made for many of the corporate functions jurisdictions currently maintain permanent staff to perform, especially in medium and small jurisdictions (including payroll preparation, transport, etc.). The potential for inter-agency cooperation among various government departments--again, particularly in smaller communities--also deserves further exploration. Not only might rationalization of administrative support effect budgetary savings, there is a considerable chance that the services could be more efficiently delivered and minimize many of the frustrations felt by field officers at the lack of coordination among various public-sponsored programs.

From the data collected for this study, it became quite obvious that the majority of CEOs of school jurisdictions believed they had downsized/reduced their budgets as much as possible--usually by cutting "furthest from the classroom". Isolated cuts of support staff may well have greater impact on the classroom (especially classroom management) than increases in pupil:teacher ratios, especially if alternative groupings of students and alternative timetabling are not explored for their potential classroom management benefits and also for facilitating student learning. Previously cited proposed changes to the funding of education in Alberta will require jurisdictional administrators to exploit fully the variety of resources available to them for the conduct of educational programs and services. Resources not previously identified by many administrators as such will require recognition and manipulation/management for schools to achieve their educational goals within the context of provincial reductions to jurisdictions of grant moneys by 5.6%, effective April 1, 1994 (Government of Alberta, 1994a). Of particular significance in this regard is the apparent flexibility for self-managing schools to take advantage of innovative practices, on an individual or even cluster basis, of alternative learning structures that may be best managed site-by-site and not at the jurisdictional level. There is support in the literature (Monk, 1992) that such educational productivity is better focused within individual classrooms--leading in turn to consideration of incentives for "efficient teaching".

CEOs participating in the study revealed the majority of downsizing jurisdictions to be most concerned with activities relating to outcomes and authority in the decision-making processes and less concerned with democracy and process--the two elements highlighted by the literature as most important to organizational members in strategic decision making. On that basis, those jurisdictions engaging in broad-based collaborative decision-making processes would appear to be the best placed to minimize organizational dysfunctioning during budget cutting activities, as well as their benefiting from a greater number of informational sources.

The day to day challenge for educational administrators in times of preoccupation with financial constraint may well be not to forget the lesson that Coleman and LaRocque (1990) believe was learned by educators during the period of declining enrollments (when admittedly, increases in government funding were still available to those with stable or increasing enrollments), that "students constitute the basic resource of school systems" (p. 129), implying a need to organize better that particular resource as part of a revised educational strategy. In the longer term, there is an obvious need for educational leaders/administrators to be aware of alternative change processes to those depending on planned/incremental reform; cutback management suggests that decision-making processes must be responsive to the environment and consequently, unlikely to be based solely on rationality. Though the study was conducted within one Canadian province, these implications, mainly because of their focus at the school level, are suggested as worthy of consideration by public school systems of any size.

Implications and Recommendations for Research

While time-management as a science has often been scorned by those of more humanistic perspectives, the propensity for many of the respondents to select budget reduction strategies that will substantially erode support staff and services implies a need to identify ways in which teachers can be assisted in achieving peak effectiveness (not necessarily just efficiency) and minimal stress through time-management of their classroom and various educational learning techniques. While progress in education production research has gained momentum over the past few years, it is only recently that the emphasis has moved to the micro-approach that emphasizes the classroom rather than the school or jurisdiction (Monk, 1992). The current financial imperatives offer even more incentive for discovering ways in which teachers can most effectively allocate available resources across their teaching endeavors.

Many of the media articles read during the period of the study highlighted that activities which some teachers perceive to be of paramount importance are not necessarily valued as such by their client base or colleagues in administration. Similarly, alternative modes of utilizing resources (including students' learning abilities) need to be investigated and reported to encourage innovative approaches to restructuring education so that the end result of this period of downsizing activity will not be recorded (as it was in the time of school decline) as simply a time when educationalists did "less of the same", with the propensity to become entrapped in cyclical downsizings.

Some of the cross tabulations of variables used in the analysis of data did not lend themselves to extensive cohesive discussion and were not subjected to inferential statistical techniques because of the exploratory/descriptive nature of this particular study and the limitations imposed by the population chosen for participation. However they may provide other researchers with indications of issues/areas worthy of further study and include such links as those found between jurisdictional size and the use of various staff reduction strategies, and between characteristics of decision making and the use of various strategies. Many such observations were seemingly logical relationships (for example, small jurisdictions' higher concerns with equity and organizational culture--possibly because of the more intimate nature of the organization) and simply served to validate the consistency of survey participants' responses.

In the absence of an established survey instrument for determining what decision-making processes had been used by the participants in the study, several questions on the survey were designed to overcome this void. While analysis of the question detailing 24 characteristics of various decision-making models did not initially indicate a propensity for downsizing jurisdictions to favor any one model in their deliberations, it did provide evidence of the internal consistency that was hoped for between various components in the questionnaire. However, the factor analysis using those same characteristics provided a better tool for correlations with other variables in the survey and revealed the potential usefulness for a standardized instrument of this sort.

A survey of downsizing/budget reduction activities in Alberta's school jurisdictions in approximately three to four years time could well use this initial study for baseline data in establishing whether the downsizing goals of the provincial government and individual school jurisdictions have been achieved. If prior research in the corporate sector ("False Economies," 1991; Tomasko, 1992) and evaluations of school decline (Cibulka, 1987) are any indication, chances are that less than 50% of the jurisdictions will have achieved their goals; or, in this instance where the provincial government is mandating restructuring, it may be possible to confirm the literature's contention that organizations involved in such fundamental change with broader objectives than just job elimination have a higher probability of achieving their downsizing goals.

In Chapter 3 of this dissertation, the value of case study methodology for in-depth exploration of the research topic was recognized but not favored in the absence of data on the contextual setting for such an approach. In the belief that this study was able to discover the significant variables in the field situation and lay the groundwork for more systematic and rigorous testing of hypotheses on relations among the variables, there appears to be particular potential for comparison of downsizing/budget reduction activities among individual schools in those jurisdictions where school self-management is a feature of the administration. Impressions gained during interviews tended to indicate that this and/or the classroom may be the locus for innovative responses to budget restraint. It is believed that within the realm of case studies there is also potential for updating budget-policy studies from the period of school decline (Cibulka, 1987) and for emulating studies conducted on downsizing in the private and higher education sectors (such as those reported by Hardy) which might better distinguish between the environmental factors and influences than was possible by survey. The provincial government's mandate for amalgamations of jurisdictions also provides the opportunity for action researchers (or the inspired individual critical theorist) to explore the administrative potential of what could be termed turnaround educational management--working with individual jurisdictions and their schools in the "reformation" process.

Concluding Remarks and Personal Reflections

During the period in which this study was conducted, the financial constraints imposed upon school jurisdictions in Alberta increased significantly. Articles both in the popular press and more specialized media attest to the effects of the current fiscal restraint on the administration of school jurisdictions: "Books or buses? Funding cuts force school boards to look at tougher choices"; "Staff cuts certain in public school budget"; "Teachers learn to do more with less"; and "Schools prepare for slashed budgets: 'Demoralized' teachers will be pressed to do more work in less time" are just a minute sampling of headlines from daily newspapers clipped during the time of the study and appear destined to continue as the education battle slogans of the 1990s. The preoccupation by the ATA and with many of the media items on decreasing funding per student has been revealed by survey responses and prior research, such as that conducted by Coleman and LaRocque (1990) and Monk (1992), to be a poor basis for pursuing the battle, the meaning of such a measure varying wildly between the very large jurisdictions and those with minimal central administration, and lack of evidence that funding per student correlates with educational quality.

CEOs preference (that is, used by over 45% of downsizing jurisdictions) for selective cuts emphasize a commitment to rational processes (Hardy, 1987) and is indicative of the consistency CEOs showed in their responses to the survey instrument. Notably, across-the-board type cuts, usually aimed at political expediency (Whetten, 1981), were only used as a budget reduction strategy by just under six percent of downsizing jurisdictions, a fact that would be applauded by Chabotar and Honan (1990) whose experiences as consultants to downsizing educational organizations led them to stress that across-the-board reductions should be minimized; and similarly appreciated by Berger (1982) who determined that strategies emphasizing efficiency were more effective than those emphasizing equity.

The support by some parents via the popular media for the government's proposals to restructure education over the next three years indicates a desire by at least a vocal portion of the schools' "clientele" for educational administrators to try alternative modes for managing the full range of resources to achieve different educational outcomes than those which are featured (and often publicly criticized) in the present system. Unfortunately, a number of school jurisdiction administrators appear to be engaged in full-time denial; many responses to the economic situation have tended to be reactionary rather than proactive and somewhat less than inspirational.

Those jurisdictions which were specifically outcome oriented in their decision making and aware of the political imperatives of financial constraint were prepared to use less popular cost cutting strategies to achieve their budgetary goals, a pattern of decision-making behavior that would seem to correspond with the provincial government's three year business plan for reducing the provincial debt. A political perspective also incorporates a potential for bargaining and the attendant likelihood of a greater range of alternative options to be considered. The propensity for educational administrators to identify with rational decision-making processes may well have inhibited the inculcation of different approaches to assessing the most effective use of educational resources.

From a personal perspective, I wonder whether the lack of or only the secondary recognition of the political imperative in some ways intrinsically precipitated the provincial government's mandate for fundamental changes to the governance of schooling in Alberta. There seemed to be a certain naiveté that ignored the possibility that the economic pressures were also the manifestation of political imperatives and that there was a need to interpret and reconcile somewhat conflicting expectations from the environment as a necessity rather than an option. From the most recent media reports and personal feedback from superintendents, it appears the preoccupation with the rationality (or the economics) of downsizing/budget restraint is already evolving or refocussing on the political aspects of the situation as the pressures for restructuring have become more intense.

Conducting a study which revealed (especially in the open-ended questions on the survey, the post-survey interviews, and reviews of the popular media) such a spectrum of frustration with educational resources' management by both school jurisdictions and the provincial government, heightened no doubt by mounting personal insecurities as the study was concluding, at times seemed far removed from a primary concern for educational outcomes and focused more upon processes. Though the rhetoric to keep cutback management "furthest from the classroom" was the prevailing sentiment throughout the study, one had to wonder why so many people were primarily concerned with keeping change away from an area that is criticized (albeit by a vocal minority which may not be representative of the wider community) for being ineffective. From the perspective of one with no vested interest in either the outcomes of the provincial government's fiscal program or the school jurisdictions' administrators' concern with the local governance of education, it appeared the sooner whatever changes to be implemented were made, the sooner new attitudes could be inculcated towards resource management. Rather than educators and the community expending time on discussing and/or resisting what changes might occur, they could refocus somewhat sooner on providing the best possible educational opportunities and experiences for students within the redefined financial constraints (though not necessarily giving up the fight for additional funds). Although downsizing was recognized by a number of CEOs as a viable mode of managing those resources and as an opportunity for change, that perspective may change as their personal insecurities accrue or personally favored programs are challenged.

The downsizing jurisdiction with which there was most contact for the purposes of this study exemplified "successful" downsizing as described in the literature, not only in achieving their budgetary goals, but also in their commitment to strategic planning, review of human resources policies to achieve more flexibility, awareness of the political imperative, participation of stakeholders in collaborative decision-making processes, preparedness to undertake total restructuring, devolution of responsibility to individual schools, and use of consultants for expert advice. Not least of their advantages in times of fiscal constraint must also be their access to capital reserves accumulated, one assumes, partly through good management and the relative affluence of the community (in previously good economic times). The discretionary use of those reserves now appears to be ameliorating many of the potential hardships for the jurisdiction's employees.

Advice proffered as a result of educational studies conducted during and after the period of school decline (Cibulka, 1987; Zerchykov, 1982) and more recent research conducted on downsizing in the corporate and higher education sectors (particularly Hardy and Tomasko) does not seem generally to have been heeded--except by those who were there, though the current administrative awareness of how to secure support through using different decision-making processes did seem more prominent in the current budgetary exercises.

CEOs' indications that they were fairly often satisfied that the decision-making process used by their jurisdictions to determine which downsizing/budget reduction strategies would be used, that the decision-making process was adequate to achieve its goals, and that their decisions were based on enough information, could be interpreted as a fairly high belief that the decision processes they had used were the best they could be. This sentiment is in stark contrast with the experiences recounted by several of the researcher's colleagues who were involved in downsizing school systems in Australia, but who also tended to emphasize the political imperative over the economic. In addition to the previously noted recommendations for studies, I wonder whether or not further research would indicate any relationship to exist between those factors--which in effect, would also reinforce, as it is believed this study did, the validity of some of the accepted decision-making models for describing organizational behavior.

Though made as a seemingly incidental comment during an interview, one senior administrator pondered on the possibility that the failure of school jurisdictions to manage budget restraint in the late 1970s-early 1980s effectively and the propensity to relinquish any benefits gained during that time over the ensuing abundant years has been responsible for the increased hardship now being experienced. According to Tomasko (1992), that is exactly what has happened in most private sector downsizings, but need not be repeated in the educational context if the current situation is used to restructure the delivery of educational services by resizing educational tasks, then modifying the shape of jurisdictional administration.

While the personal impetus for this study was a concern for the employees apparently traumatized by the downsizing of organizations, in particular, the downsizing of a state school system in Australia, the academic interest arose on becoming aware of the (aged) literature on school decline and the emerging literature on private sector downsizings. There was a suspicion that perhaps people such as myself, professionally committed to unrelished involvement in the decision-making processes surrounding such activity, should be able to benefit themselves and their organizations from others' experiences of similar situations. And while I now have consolidated my ideas on some management decisions that can be made in respect of participation in the decision-making processes and the use of particular strategies for budget reduction, I think there is possibly nothing quite like being sensitized to the issues by experiencing them oneself.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE AND INTERVIEW NOMINATION FORM

RESPONDING TO FINANCIAL CONSTRAINT: A RESEARCH PROJECT ON DOWNSIZING IN ALBERTA SCHOOL JURISDICTIONS

JUNE 1993

June 1993

Dear Superintendent:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research project by completing this questionnaire.

As indicated in the accompanying letter, all information collected as part of this survey will be treated in the strictest confidence, especially in light of the sensitive nature of the topic and in the interest of eliciting genuine responses from all participants so that the results will be of benefit to them. The study is attempting to discover how educational CEOs make decisions in response to financial constraint, not to evaluate specific answers. None of the participants in the survey, or their jurisdictions, will be individually identifiable in the resulting report, nor the data collected made available in any other way that would compromise participants' anonymity. The questionnaire does have an identification number for mailing purposes. However, study procedures ensure that neither your name nor your jurisdiction's would be associated with the specific data which you report.

Once you have completed the questionnaire please use the enclosed stamped and self-addressed envelope provided to return it to my mailbox at the University of Alberta.

Thank you once again for taking the time to contribute your experience and knowledge to the project. I sincerely value your cooperation.

Naida Tattersall

"Downsizing" defined: A scaling down of the organization through planned workforce reduction.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Survey No:

Please answer each question freely and openly from your personal perceptions of the current situation in your own school jurisdiction. Unless otherwise indicated, respond to each of the questions by placing a check mark ✔ in the appropriate boxes ☐.

Part I: The following items explore the financial status of your school jurisdiction.

1. Check one of the following options which best describes your jurisdiction's current organizational status:
    - 1) Downsizing ☐
    - 2) Stable ☐
    - 3) Expanding ☐

2. Check one of the following options which best describes your jurisdiction's 1993/94 planned expenditure per student:
    - 1) Reducing ☐
    - 2) Stable ☐
    - 3) Increasing ☐

3. If appropriate, please identify briefly what actions you are taking/intend to take to increase revenue:

    ____

    ____

    ____

    ____

If you selected (1) in either of the first two questions, please proceed with Part II of the questionnaire.

If you did not select (1) in either of the first two questions, please proceed to Part VI (on the last page) of the questionnaire.

Part II: The following items explore specific responses to fiscal constraint.

4. In what terms has your jurisdiction stated its downsizing/budget reduction goals, e.g., as an amount in dollars or numbers of staff?

   1) $__________ or 2) staff #s__________ or 3) other __________

5. Over what period of time (in months) is this goal to be achieved? ________

6. Is a downsizing goal statement available?

   1) No ☐ 2) Yes ☐

   If you answered "yes", please return a copy of the goal statement with the questionnaire?

7. There are many different ways in which school jurisdictions may respond to financial constraint. Which of the following strategies has your jurisdiction decided to use to meet its downsizing/budget reduction goals? Please check all that are applicable:

   Reducing staff

   1) Reducing new hirings/natural attrition of middle/senior administrative staff ☐
   2) Reducing new hirings/natural attrition of secretarial and para-professional staff ☐
   3) Reducing new hirings/natural attrition of classroom teachers ☐
   4) Reducing new hirings/natural attrition of specialist staff (e.g., teacher-librarians) ☐
   5) Reducing new hirings/natural attrition of professional support staff (e.g., curriculum consultants) ☐
   6) Early/voluntary retirements ☐
   7) Voluntary severance (incentives offered to those who choose to leave, but not of retirement age) ☐
   8) Enforced severance based on seniority ☐
   9) Enforced severance based on performance criteria/merit ☐
   10) Enforced severance based on other criteria ☐

   Please list "other criteria" ____________________

   ____

   ____

   11) Provision of outplacement aid to displaced staff ☐

Redeployment of staff

12) Intra-jurisdiction reassignment of teaching/certificated staff ☐
13) Intra-jurisdiction reassignment of administrative staff ☐
14) Intra-jurisdiction reassignment of other staff ☐
Please list categories of "other staff" ____________________
____
____

15) Provision of special training in new/enhanced skills to displaced staff ☐
16) Loan/transfer of staff to other jurisdictions ☐
17) Increased leave opportunities for staff ☐

Rationalizing assets and services

18) Sale of assets ☐
19) Contracting out services ☐
Please list which services ____________________________
____
____

20) Restructuring by adopting site (i.e. school) based management to reduce head office staff ☐
21) Restructuring by alternative methods ☐
Please list "alternative methods" ________________________
____
____

22) School closures ☐
23) School amalgamations ☐
24) Amalgamation with another jurisdiction ☐

Reducing direct spending

25) Reduction of maintenance of facilities ☐
26) Reduction of capital expenditures ☐
27) Reduction in purchases of instructional supplies/materials ☐
28) Reduction in purchases of library materials ☐
29) Negotiation of reduction in salaries ☐
30) Reduction of levels of service ☐
31) Programs cut selectively ☐
32) Programs cut across the board ☐

33) Implementation of energy conservation program ☐
34) Increased use of office technology ☐
35) Other measures ☐
Please identify ____________________________________
____
____

8. In addition to using some of the above strategies, your jurisdiction may have changed a number of its employment/personnel policies/practices in direct response to financial constraint. Please check all applicable:

1) Use of more part time staff ☐
2) Requirement for beginning teachers to have specializations in more than one area ☐
3) Increasing number/range of professional development programs available (to provide wider expertise within existing staff) ☐
4) Other ☐
Please list "other" ____________________________________
____
____

9. Do you have formal redeployment/redundancy policies?

1) No ☐ 2) Yes ☐

If you answered "yes", please return a copy of the policy statement with the questionnaire.

10. If you answered "yes" to Question 9, are the policies included in your current collective bargaining agreement?

1) No ☐ 2) Yes ☐

Part III: The following items explore your recollections of the decision-making processes used in your jurisdiction in responding to financial constraint.

11. Please indicate to what extent (by circling one number, 1-5) which of the following sources were used for determining what downsizing/budget reduction strategies would be used:

1) Financial forecasting techniques

not at all 1 2 3 4 5 exclusively

2) Computed information using management data base/s

not at all 1 2 3 4 5 exclusively

3) Individual judgment of decision makers (i.e. put to vote)

not at all 1 2 3 4 5 exclusively

4) Bargaining between decision makers

not at all 1 2 3 4 5 exclusively

5) An inspired resolution presented by one person

not at all 1 2 3 4 5 exclusively

6) Other

not at all 1 2 3 4 5 exclusively

Please specify "other" ______________________________

____

____

12. Please indicate which of the following types of issues were most influential in deciding which strategies are being used by numbering the **most** influential as **(1)** and the **least** influential as **(3)**:

1) Political (i.e., of a local nature) ○
2) Economic ○
3) Legal (e.g. collective bargaining agreements, employment legislation) ○

13. Please indicate (by checking all applicable) which of the following people participated formally (i.e., by attending meetings etc.) in the decision-making process:

1) Teachers ☐
2) Principals ☐
3) Board members ☐
4) Community members ☐
5) ATA representatives ☐

6) Other ☐
Please list "other" ____________________
____
____

14. Please indicate (by checking all applicable) sources of information and recommendations for strategies on which downsizing decisions were made:

1) Past experience of decision makers ☐
2) Personnel officers within the organization ☐
3) Finance officers within the organization ☐
4) External consultants ☐
5) Reviewing business trends ☐
6) Reviewing public service trends ☐
7) Reviewing literature ☐
8) Colleagues in other jurisdictions--informally ☐
9) Colleagues in other jurisdictions--through formal meetings/ communication ☐
10) Representatives from Alberta Education ☐
11) Other ☐
Please list "other" ____________________
____
____

15. Which one of the following sequences of activities best describes the decision-making process used in your jurisdiction to determine your restructuring/downsizing strategies?

1) Problem definition -> consideration of alternatives -> selection of optimum alternative ☐
2) Uncertainty -> discussion -> a reasonable solution ☐
3) Issue identification -> conflict bargaining ☐

16. When making decisions about downsizing, please indicate how often (by circling one number, 1-5, for each statement):

1) Costs and benefits of alternatives were weighed off against each other

never 1 2 3 4 5 very often

2) Bargaining was used to arrive at solutions

never 1 2 3 4 5 very often

3) There was conflict over alternatives

never 1 2 3 4 5 very often

4) Aspects of the organizational culture were mentioned

never 1 2 3 4 5 very often

5) There was "fluid participation" (i.e. different people took part at different times)

never 1 2 3 4 5 very often

6) Alternatives were considered in a logical sequence

never 1 2 3 4 5 very often

7) Alternatives were compared to each other individually

never 1 2 3 4 5 very often

8) There was a sense of "muddling through"

never 1 2 3 4 5 very often

9) There was a sense of "groping" for solutions

never 1 2 3 4 5 very often

10) Decisions involved top management only

never 1 2 3 4 5 very often

11) Decisions were mainly influenced by senior officers with delegated responsibilities for personnel and/or finance

never 1 2 3 4 5 very often

12) Mention was made of "efficiency"

never 1 2 3 4 5 very often

13) Mention was made of "productivity"

never 1 2 3 4 5 very often

14) Mention was made of "educational values"

never 1 2 3 4 5 very often

15) Mention was made of "equity"

never 1 2 3 4 5 very often

16) Serendipitous solutions seemed to evolve

never 1 2 3 4 5 very often

17) Economic goals were stated

never 1 2 3 4 5 very often

18) Mention was made of protecting employee moral

never 1 2 3 4 5 very often

19) Mention was made of accommodating interest groups and stakeholders

never 1 2 3 4 5 very often

20) Decisions were voted upon

never 1 2 3 4 5 very often

21) Decisions were arrived at by consensus

never 1 2 3 4 5 very often

22) Decisions were based on enough information

never 1 2 3 4 5 very often

23) You felt the process was personally stressful

never 1 2 3 4 5 very often

24) You felt the decision-making process was adequate to achieve its goals

never 1 2 3 4 5 very often

17. Were decisions about downsizing made as part of the regular budgetary process?

1) No ☐ 2) Yes ☐

18. Do you think the majority of board members consider downsizing/budget reduction to be either:

1) A threat? ☐ or
2) An opportunity? ☐

19. Where was the issue of downsizing first raised?

1) At a board meeting/by board members ☐ or
2) Within the administration ☐

20. Did the decision-making process concentrate on identifying either:

1) A solution that had worked for you or someone else previously ☐ or
2) A new solution that you had not used or were unfamiliar with previously? ☐

21. Were there requests from interest groups or individuals to be formally involved in the downsizing/budget reduction decision making?

1) No ☐ 2) Yes ☐

Please identify which groups/individuals

a) ____________________
b) ____________________
c) ____________________
d) ____________________

22. If you answered "yes" to the previous question, were such requests for formal involvement acceded to?

1) Group a)	No ☐	Yes ☐
2) Group b)	No ☐	Yes ☐
3) Group c)	No ☐	Yes ☐
4) Group d)	No ☐	Yes ☐

23. Do you believe that the downsizing/budget reduction strategies chosen by your jurisdiction were perceived as fair by the majority of:

1) Teachers?	No ☐	Yes ☐
2) Principals?	No ☐	Yes ☐
3) Central office administrators?	No ☐	Yes ☐

4) Central office clerical staff? No ☐ Yes ☐
5) Board members? No ☐ Yes ☐

24. Would you agree that financial constraint in education

1) Is a big problem for your jurisdiction?
No ☐ Yes ☐
2) Will last for at least another two to three years?
No ☐ Yes ☐
3) Can only be resolved by gaining more government funding?
No ☐ Yes ☐

25. 1) How would you describe (by circling one number, 1-5) the morale of employees in your school jurisdiction?

very low 1 2 3 4 5 very high

2) Is this surprising?
No ☐ Yes ☐
Give reasons if desired ______________________________

26. As CEO, do you perceive financial constraint more as either:

1) A threat? ☐ or
2) An opportunity? ☐
Give reasons if desired ______________________________

27. Please briefly describe how downsizing/budget reduction is being monitored in your jurisdiction (i.e., identifying whether it is achieving its goals or whether strategies need to be reviewed) ______________________________

28. Please make any other comments you may wish about administrative/management adjustments your school jurisdiction has made in response to financial constraint

____

____

____

____

____

______________[Enclose additional page/s if space is insufficient]

Part IV: The following items explore your personal feelings about decision making in response to financial constraint.

29. Indicate (by circling one number, 1-5) to what extent each of the following groups/individuals should be involved in decision-making processes relating to downsizing/budget reductions:

1) A small group of experts/key employees

not at all 1 2 3 4 5 exclusively

2) External consultants

not at all 1 2 3 4 5 exclusively

3) The CEO

not at all 1 2 3 4 5 exclusively

4) The board

not at all 1 2 3 4 5 exclusively

5) Other

not at all 1 2 3 4 5 exclusively

Please specify "other" ______________________________

____

____

30. Do you believe that a formal strategic plan could make issues such as downsizing easier to deal with?

1) No ☐ 2) Yes ☐

Give reasons if desired ______________________________

____

Part V: Respondent details.

31. Year of birth __________

32. 1) Male ☐ or

2) Female ☐

33. Educational background (please check all applicable):

1) Baccalaureate degree in education ☐

2) Baccalaureate degree in another discipline ☐

3) Diploma/Certificate in Education ☐

4) Masters in education ☐

5) Masters in another discipline ☐

6) Doctorate in education ☐

7) Doctorate in other discipline ☐

34. Total number of years as CEO of a school jurisdiction __________

35. Number of years in current position __________

Part VI: Additional comments.

36. Please supply the total figures for your school jurisdiction:

1) Budget for 1992/93 fiscal year $______________

2) Budget for 1993/94 fiscal year $______________

37. Answering the previous questions may have led you to thoughts about other important and related matters which have not been mentioned. Any comment you care to make about the decision making process as it relates to restructuring/downsizing/budget reduction in school jurisdictions in response to financial constraint would be of interest to the researcher.___

____

____

____

____

38. Do you wish to receive a summary of the results of this study?

No ☐ Yes ☐

It is intended to follow up this survey with a small number of interviews. Please indicate if you are willing/would like/do not wish to be interviewed and/or would recommend others in the jurisdiction to be interviewed by supplying names and contacts (including your own if appropriate) on the enclosed sheet of paper which will be kept separate from the questionnaire to ensure anonymity/confidentiality is maintained.

Thank you for your participation in the study. May I assure you that the valuable time you have spent in completing the questionnaire is most appreciated.

Please return to:

Naida Tattersall
c/- Department of Educational Administration
7-104 Education Building North
University of Alberta
Edmonton AB
T6G 2G5

('Phone no: (403) 433-8768)

Follow-up Interviews--Nomination Form

Please check all that are applicable:

- I do not wish to be involved in a short follow-up interview ☐
  Your name: ______________________________
- I am willing to be involved in a short follow-up interview ☐
  Your name: ______________________________
- I would recommend the following person/s for interview ☐

Recommended Interviewee Name: ______________________________
Designation: ______________________________
Contact 'Phone Number: ______________________________
Fax Number: ______________________________

Recommended Interviewee Name: ______________________________
Designation: ______________________________
Contact 'Phone Number: ______________________________
Fax Number: ______________________________

Recommended Interviewee Name: ______________________________
Designation: ______________________________
Contact 'Phone Number: ______________________________
Fax Number: ______________________________

Name of School Jurisdiction: ______________________________

Thank you.

**Nominated interviewees may include teachers, principals, board members, ATA representatives, senior administrators, personnel and/or finance officers, or any person you believe would be a good informant on downsizing decision-making issues.*

APPENDIX B

PILOT STUDY LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

Department of Educational Administration
7-104 Education Building North
University of Alberta
Edmonton AB. T6G 2G5
Telephone (403) 492-4909
Fax (403) 492-2024

Dear

Thank you for agreeing to pretest the attached questionnaire prior to its distribution to other school superintendents in Alberta. In addition to completing the questionnaire for your jurisdiction, I would appreciate any comments/suggestions you may wish to make in respect of clarity and intelligibility of the questions and procedures, on specific items in the questionnaire itself or the accompanying letter of transmittal. An additional copy of the draft questionnaire is enclosed on which you are invited to write any such comments. An estimation of the time needed to complete the questionnaire would also be useful (I hope to refine the final version so as to take approximately 20 minutes, or less).

As I am desirous of sending out the revised questionnaire prior to mid-June, I would appreciate the return of the questionnaire and your comments in the stamped addressed envelope to myself at the above address at your earliest convenience.

Should you have any comments you wish to make verbally, please ring me at home on (403) 433-8768.

Gratefully,

Naida Tattersall

25 May, 1993.

APPENDIX C

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

University of Alberta
Edmonton
Canada T6G 2G5

Department of Educational Administration
Faculty of Education
7-104 Education Building North, Telephone (403) 492-5241
Fax (403) 492-2024

24 June, 1993

«title» «fname» «lname»
«position», «org»
«address1»
«address2», «pcode»

Dear «title» «lname»:

As CEO of a school jurisdiction facing reduced government funding, your participation in a research project on the decision-making processes involved in downsizing would be most appreciated. The project is of particular personal interest to me because of my previous involvement as a senior administrator in downsizing school systems in Australia and will constitute the research component of my doctoral studies with the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Alberta.

The purpose of the project is to study the downsizing strategies adopted by Alberta school jurisdictions in response to financial constraint, the better to understand the decision-making processes involved and to gain some impression of the incidence and extent of downsizing activities throughout the province Previous research in relation to fiscal constraint/resource allocation and decision making in school systems has depended predominantly on fictional case studies as opposed to the real life opportunity provided by the current economic circumstances. By seizing the opportunity, it is anticipated the study could also perform an incidental clearinghouse function by way of the collection and aggregation of information on strategies used by school systems in coping with the challenges of fiscal constraint.

I am particularly desirous of obtaining your responses to the enclosed questionnaire (which is the first phase of the project) in order to gain the benefit of your experience in understanding some of the issues involved. The questionnaire has been tested with a sampling of school superintendents and has been revised in order to make it possible to gain all the necessary data while requiring a minimum amount of your time. I anticipate the questionnaire will take you between 5 and 25 minutes, depending on the extent of downsizing activity in your jurisdiction.

It would be appreciated if you could complete the questionnaire prior to 16 July, 1993 and return it in the stamped and self-addressed envelope enclosed. Please be assured of the importance of your participation in the survey, the anonymity and confidentiality of your responses, and the availability to you of the research results on completion of the study. The questionnaire does have an identification number for mailing purposes and for correlation with demographic data from Alberta Education. However, study procedures ensure that neither your name nor your jurisdiction's will be associated with the specific data which you report.

I would welcome any comments or inquiries concerning the project and may be contacted by 'phone at home on (403) 433 8768 or at the university by 'phone on (403) 492 4909 or by fax on (403) 492 2024. Should you have any concerns, my supervisor is Dr. R. G. McIntosh, who can be reached at the telephone and facsimile numbers on the letterhead. Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

Naida Tattersall

APPENDIX D

POSTCARD REMINDER

2 July 1993

Last week a questionnaire seeking information on your jurisdiction's decision making in response to financial constraint was mailed to you.

If you have already completed and returned it to me, please accept my sincere thanks. If not, please consider doing so today. It is important that your response be included in the study to achieve the most accurate understanding of the topic and to ensure the resulting report incorporates your knowledge and experiences.

If by some chance you did not receive the questionnaire, or it has been misplaced, please call me as soon as possible and I will get another in the mail to you at once. My telephone number is (403) 433-8768. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Naida Tattersall

APPENDIX E

FOLLOW-UP LETTER

University of Alberta
Edmonton
Canada T6G 2G5

Department of Educational Administration
Faculty of Education
7-104 Education Building North, Telephone (403) 492-5241
Fax (403) 492-2024

[date--1 week after due date]

[title & name
position
organization
address]

Dear [title & name]:

This is a follow-up to a letter and a questionnaire which I sent to you on [date] regarding a research project.

The purpose of the project is to study the downsizing strategies adopted by Alberta school jurisdictions in response to financial constraint, the better to understand the decision-making processes involved and to gain some impression of the incidence and extent of downsizing activities throughout the province. Previous research in relation to fiscal constraint/resource allocation and decision making in school systems has depended predominantly on fictional case studies as opposed to the real life opportunity provided by the current economic circumstances. By seizing the opportunity, it is anticipated the study could also perform an incidental clearinghouse function by way of the collection and aggregation of information on strategies used by school systems in coping with the challenges of fiscal constraint.

Your completion of the questionnaire is very important to this research project. Please take a few moments to respond to the questionnaire and return it in the stamped self-addressed envelope by [2 weeks from time of this posting]. Perhaps your assistant or associate could respond on your behalf.

I would welcome any comments or inquiries concerning the project and may be contacted by 'phone at home on (403) 433 8768 or at the university by 'phone on (403) 492 4909 or by fax on (403) 492 2024. Should you have any concerns, my supervisor is Dr. R. G. McIntosh, who can be reached at the telephone and facsimile numbers on the letterhead. Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

Naida Tattersall

PS. If you have returned the questionnaire within the past few days, thank you for your assistance with the study.

APPENDIX F

POST-SURVEY INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Schedule

- Self-introduction and overview of the study thus far.
- Aim of the interviews viz. exploring human resources aspect of how jurisdictions respond to financial constraint.
- Assurances re confidentiality and anonymity.
- Clarify interviewee's perception of organizational status, downsizing strategies used, main influences on downsizing decision-making, and decision-making processes (as per responses to Questions 1, 7, 12, and 16 of the questionnaire) of the jurisdiction.

The following guidelines were then used to direct discussion if the issues did not evolve out of the introductions:

- For administrators: Seek an indication of which of the downsizing strategies used by the jurisdiction appeared to have obtained the results required.

  What would they do differently if faced with the same decisions again?

  What were the most valuable sources of information in helping the decision makers choose strategies?

  Has the jurisdiction made any changes in personnel and/or employment policies and/or practices?

  What (if any) impact did interest groups have on the strategies you decided to use?

- Teachers and board members: What were your impressions of the strategies chosen/recommended?

  What alternatives were/are there?

  What was your involvement?

- All interviewees: Is there any particular sentiment or aspect of downsizing/budget reduction that you feel strongly about and/or lessons you have learnt that you could pass on to others?

APPENDIX G

LETTER TO ACCOMPANY INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

University of Alberta
Edmonton
Canada T6G 2G5

Department of Educational Administration
Faculty of Education
7-104 Education Building North, Telephone (403) 492-5241
Fax (403) 492-2024

Date

«title» «fname» «lname»
«position»
«org»
«address1»
«address2». «pcode»

Dear «title» «lname»:

I am most appreciative of the time you spent with me [date and place] and the information you so willingly shared about your experiences of your school jurisdiction's response to financial constraint.

Please read the enclosed transcript of our discussion and consider whether it conveys the intended meaning of your comments. Feel free to clarify any of the responses and add to the transcript any other ideas on the issue of financial constraint/downsizing that you would care to make. If there are any comments you would like me to disregard in the data analysis for the study, please put a line through these comments on the transcript. As indicated in our introductory conversation, I am interested in discovering personal perspectives of the downsizing activities reported in a survey of all Alberta Superintendents.

Should you wish to send any pages with alterations/clarification back to me, you could fax them to me on 433-4753.

Once again, I would like to assure you of the anonymity and confidentiality of the information you shared with me and the value of the knowledge and experience you have contributed to the research project.

Should you have any questions at any time regarding your involvement in the study, please call me on 433-8768. Thank you again for your participation.

Yours sincerely,

Naida Tattersall

(Home address: 305-10883 Saskatchewan Dr., Edmonton AB T6E 4S6)

APPENDIX H

TABLE 4.6.2: RANK ORDERING OF STRATEGIES WITHIN CATEGORIES USED BY DOWNSIZING JURISDICTIONS TO MEET DOWNSIZING/BUDGET REDUCTION GOALS

Table 4.6.2

Rank Ordering of Strategies Within Categories Used by Downsizing Jurisdictions to Meet Downsizing/Budget Goals
(n = 71)

Strategy	f	%f	Rank Order
Reducing Staff			
3) Reducing new hirings/natural attrition of classroom teachers	51	71.8	1
6) Early/voluntary retirements	46	68.4	2
2) Reducing new hirings/natural attrition of secretarial and para-professional staff	44	62	3
1) Reducing new hirings/natural attrition of middle/senior administrative staff	40	56.3	4
4) Reducing new hirings/natural attrition of specialist staff (e.g., teacher-librarians)	20	28.2	5.5
7) Voluntary severance (incentives offered to those who choose to leave, but not of retirement age)	20	28.2	5.5
5) Reducing new hirings/natural attrition of professional support staff (e.g., curriculum consultants)	19	26.8	7
8) Enforced severance based on seniority	5	7	8.5
9) Enforced severance based on performance criteria/merit	5	7	8.5
10) Enforced severance based on other criteria including: declaring incumbents of eliminated positions redundant; non-renewal of contracts; deferred salary leaves; increased pupil-teacher ratio; pooling of special education resources; changing full-time to part-time positions (e.g.. bus drivers)	4	5.6	10
11) Provision of outplacement aid to displaced staff	3	4.2	11
Redeployment of staff			
12) Intra-jurisdiction reassignment of teaching/certificated staff	38	53.5	1

Table 4.6.2 (continued)

Strategy	f	%f	Rank Order
14) Intra-jurisdiction reassignment of other staff including: teacher aides, secretarial, special education teachers, teacher-librarians, support staff, computer co-ordinators, bus drivers	21	29.6	2.5
17) Increased leave opportunities for staff	21	29.6	2.5
13) Intra-jurisdiction reassignment of administrative staff	16	22.5	4
15) Provision of special training in new/enhanced skills to displaced staff	6	8.5	5
16) Loan/transfer of staff to other jurisdictions	5	7	6
Rationalizing assets and services			
19) Contracting out services including: custodial, psychological assessment, transportation, special needs consultancies, maintenance (plumbing, electrical etc.)	30	42.3	1
20) Restructuring by adopting site (i.e. school) based management to reduce central office staff	21	29.6	2
18) Sale of assets	16	22.5	3
24) Amalgamation with another jurisdiction	11	15.5	4
22) School closures	10	14.1	5
23) School amalgamations	9	12.7	6
21) Restructuring by alternative methods including: reassignment of head office staff, shared service agreements with other jurisdictions, restructuring head office, regrouping students	5	7	7
Reducing direct spending			
26) Reduction of capital expenditures	53	74.6	1
33) Implementation of energy conservation program	52	73.2	2
27) Reduction in purchases of instructional supplies/materials	36	50.7	3
34) Increased use of office technology	34	47.9	4

Table 4.6.2 (continued)

Strategy	f	%f	Rank Order
30) Reduction of levels of service	33	46.5	5
31) Programs cut selectively	32	45.1	6
25) Reduction of maintenance of facilities	28	39.4	7
28) Reduction in purchases of library materials	23	32.4	8
29) Negotiation of reduction in salaries	22	31	9
35) Other measures including: transferring facilities to local government to operate, reduction of inservice and conference costs, reduction of professional development programs, reduction in support staff hours, less evaluations (programs, schools), efforts to reduce absenteeism	8	11.2	10
32) Programs cut across the board	4	5.6	11